FOUR URGENT ISSUES FOR NEW YORK'S NEXT CHIEF JUDGE

John Jay College's Data Collaborative for Justice Publishes Recommendations for the Equitable Administration of Justice in Criminal Courts Statewide

There are four crucial issues in dire need of reform within New York State's criminal courts and the next Chief Judge of the State of New York can use their power to address them. Regardless of who fills this position, John Jay College's Data Collaborative for Justice (DCJ) succinctly outlines the issues, supported by data, and provides specific recommendations in a new brief.

Read the Recommendations

Documented shortcomings in State court policies on **Pretrial Reform**, **The Right to a Speedy Trial**, **Racial Equity**, and **Rikers Island** can harm public trust in the administration of justice in New York. The selection of the next chief judge presents an opportunity for a visionary leader to address these problems. Often overlooked, New York's Chief Judge not only guides the State's highest court, the Court of Appeals, but also serves as head policymaker and administrator of the entire court system.

"The next chief judge will have a wonderful opportunity to create a legacy of justice and equity for New Yorkers interacting with every single court in the State," said Michael Rempel, Director, Data Collaborative for Justice. "While a comprehensive agenda could extend to housing courts, family courts, and other jurisdictions, we pointed to the need for earnest data-driven reforms centered on mass incarceration and racial equity in the criminal courts."

With support from Arnold Ventures, this Data Collaborative for Justice (DCJ) brief with recommendations offers a data-driven, collaborative, and transparent way to engage with these difficult issues and increase safety in the criminal justice system and our communities.

"It is imperative that as the judicial selection process continues, candidates be assessed not just for their abilities as a jurist but also as an adept and visionary administrator and policymaker," said Krystal Rodriguez, Policy Director, Data Collaborative for Justice (DCJ). "Our brief serves as a resource for immediate and feasible solutions to advance justice, fairness, and equity within the courts."

Four Urgent Justice Issues and Related Recommendations:

Pretrial Reform: There are a vast array of both feasible and impactful steps courts can take to detain fewer people while they are presumed innocent of a crime, while preserving safety and ensuring people's return to court. The pretrial recommendations support better, more consistent decisions regarding when pretrial conditions are truly necessary and, when bail is considered, including what amount (if any) is affordable.

The Right to a Speedy Trial: In New York City and potentially elsewhere across the State, significant delays have thwarted the constitutional right to a speedy trial and access to justice for victims. People charged with felonies seeking to exercise their right to a trial in New York City average over a year and a half with their cases pending in the Supreme Court (and average over ten months just to reach plea agreements that forego a trial). The policy brief lays out documented best practices to mitigate delay and recommends pilot projects to implement them.

Racial Equity: Data points to *sizable racial disparities* in how courts are deciding criminal cases (evidenced in the overrepresentation of Black and Brown New Yorkers in jail populations across the State), including in conviction, sentencing, and bail decisions. The DCJ brief summarizes these disparities, reminds readers of devastating findings in an earlier independent analysis, and advances initial recommendations to accelerate progress towards racial equity in the courts.

Rikers Island: Although courts do not run Rikers Island, judges' decision-making is critical in limiting the number of people who are exposed to its dangerous and traumatic environment. The courts can institute a systematic review for each individual held at Rikers Island, developing release plans inclusive of treatment or supervision in lieu of prolonged pretrial detention.

The full brief is available on the Data Collaborative for Justice's website.

The Data Collaborative for Justice (DCJ) leads critical research about frequent interactions between community members and the criminal legal system and aims to ensure that communities, and the governments that serve them, have the necessary information to develop and implement evidence-based policies, practices, and programs. DCJ's work has informed policy reforms, facilitated partnerships between researchers and government agencies across the country, spurred new scholarly research on lower-level enforcement, and been cited extensively in the press. More information about the Data Collaborative for Justice's work is available at: www.datacollaborativeforjustice.org.