The U.S. Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph joins with The Bail Project to dismantle racism and eliminate the use of cash bail in the United States criminal legal system.

The original sin of this country is racism. The legacies of white supremacy, colonization, and slavery manifest in mass incarceration where Black and brown communities experience disproportionate arrest, conviction, and incarceration rates, including those who are jailed before trial.

Bail was originally utilized as a mechanism to ensure a person returns to their court hearing to face any charges. Today, cash bail has become a tool that penalizes people who lack wealth and reinforces racial biases, subjecting folks to languish in inhumane jail conditions.

As Shameka Parrish-Wright, The Bail Project’s community advocacy and partnerships manager, notes, "The stakes are high. Cash bail is one of the key civil and racial justice issues of our day. That is why The Bail Project posts free bail for thousands of people in need every year, while also looking at the systemic level to effect meaningful change."

According to Prison Policy Initiative’s most recent report, “Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie,” more than 500,000 people are held in jail on any given night in the United States. Nearly two-thirds of those individuals are detained pretrial, despite being legally presumed innocent [1].

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Across the country, Black and brown defendants are at least 10-25% more likely than white defendants to be detained pretrial or to pay cash bail.

There has been a marked rise in the number of women held in local jails. Most of those women have experienced sexual violence, faced serious medical issues or substance abuse; they tend to also be primary caregivers to minor children [2]. Women — specifically women of color — face greater rates of detainment in jails, and confront a harmful system that exacerbates precarious economic, social, and psychological circumstances.

The Sisters of St. Joseph and their partners in mission throughout the country are called to confront racism and put our collective voice and financial power at the service of those who have experienced oppression — people who live in poverty, Black and brown communities, and women of color [3].

We vow to use our Gospel mission of unifying love for the healing and transformation of the world to disrupt the cash bail system and seek holistic, gender-responsive reentry services for people impacted by incarceration.

### FOOTNOTES

https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/women_overtime.html


[3] For the report on income and jails, see: https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/incomejails.html
CALLS TO ACTION

• **Support** a [local or national bail fund](#)

• **Call** the Biden Administration to establish a reparations commission. [View the sample script from NETWORK](#)

• **Connect** with local organizations that support people impacted by incarceration and offer holistic reentry services
  - Keyway Center in St. Louis
  - New Hour for Women & Children — Long Island
  - The Bail Project — Local Coalitions

• **Learn** more about cash bail and pretrial detention:
  - "Detaining the Poor" report from Prison Policy Initiative
  - Diversion Programs
  - "What does successful bail reform look like? To start, look to Harris County, Texas" from Prison Policy Initiative
  - Women and Mass Incarceration