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## **LUCAS COUNTY TO HOST VIRTUAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MEETINGS FOR PROJECTS TO REDUCE RACIAL AND ETHNIC DISPARITIES IN COUNTY JAIL POPULATION**

**TOLEDO, OH, October 13, 2020** -- As part of its affiliation with the MacArthur Foundation Safety + Justice Challenge, Lucas County will host a series of virtual community listening sessions and discussions on criminal justice reform and racial equity to develop projects to address ways to reduce the racial and ethnic disparities in the local jail population. Sessions will begin in October and will continue through December. The ninety-minute sessions will focus on getting input from residents, advocates, community stakeholders, and others who live, work, or have interests in the Toledo ZIP codes of 43604, 43607, 43608, and 43610.

Residents, advocates, and stakeholders who live in Lucas County but are located outside the targeted ZIP codes are invited to participate. Anchor institutions with operations in the targeted ZIP codes, including those directly impacted by crime and violence, are encouraged to participate.

“Through the work of the MacArthur Safety and Justice Challenge, Lucas County has been able to reduce the number of people being held in the jail, however racial and ethnic disparity still exists. The virtual community engagement meetings will focus on input from residents within specific ZIP codes to create small projects that will help bring that disparity down,” Commissioner Gary Byers said.

The sessions will be held on the following dates and times:

- Wednesday, October 14, from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.
- Tuesday, October 20, from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, November 4 and November 18, from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.
- Thursday, November 12, from noon to 1:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, December 2, December 9, and December 16, from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Anyone interested in participating in a community engagement session can sign up to join the email list on the Safety + Justice Challenge website at: <https://lucascountycjcc.org/SJC>

“The long awaited phase of community engagement will be crucial in helping us focus on our reform plans on community developed solutions to eliminate over-representation of people of color in our local justice system in Lucas County,” Commissioner Pete Gerken said.



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Tina Skeldon Wozniak, President of the Lucas County Commissioners, said: “Lucas County is committed to continuing the progress made by the Safety + Justice Challenge to address the disparity in the incarceration for people of color.”

Lucas County was among 20 jurisdictions chosen in 2015 by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation to participate in the Safety + Justice Challenge Network to develop comprehensive plans for creating fairer, more effective justice systems and reducing over incarceration by changing the way America thinks about and uses jails. In 2016, the Lucas County Commissioners were awarded a \$1.75 million grant to implement reforms to safely reduce Lucas County’s jail population and address racial and ethnic disparities in the justice system. Lucas County received an additional \$1.65 million grant in 2018 to continue building on efforts to advance local criminal justice system reform and safely reduce Lucas County’s jail population, bringing the Foundation’s total investment in Lucas County to \$3.5 million to date.

Through the efforts of the Safety + Justice Challenge, Lucas County has successfully reduced its jail population by 32 percent in comparison to a baseline established during November 2015 through April 2016. While Lucas County has reduced its jail population, racial and ethnic disparities still exist within the system.

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