

New Solutions Campaign

Promoting Fair & Effective Criminal Justice • Strengthening Families & Communities

To: Governor Chris Christie and the Members of the New Jersey Legislature

We, the undersigned faith leaders, express our strong support for Senate Bill 946 / Assembly Bill 1910 and urge you to take action to pass this important legislation without delay.

New Jersey's bail system is broken. Nearly three-quarters of the 15,000 people in state jails are awaiting trial—rather than serving a sentence. Decisions about who is released pending trial are based on the ability to pay bail and not on the risk to the community. Nonviolent, low-risk offenders are warehoused in jails for long periods at great financial cost to New Jersey simply because they cannot pay sometimes nominal bail amounts. Meanwhile, high-risk offenders who do have the financial resources can obtain release.

More than half of the individuals in New Jersey jails are being held for nonviolent offenses. Many of these individuals could safely be released on bail pending trial but lack the financial resources to pay the arbitrary bail amounts set by New Jersey's bail schedule. The average length of time individuals are held pending trial is almost one year.

Almost 40 percent of those held in New Jersey's jails are there solely because of their inability to pay bail. More than 10 percent cannot pay bail amounting to \$2,500 or less (more than 800 inmates are held for the inability to pay \$500 or less).

It costs about \$100 a day to hold an individual in a New Jersey jail; therefore, warehousing an individual for almost a year while awaiting trial costs New Jersey taxpayers more than \$30,000. Thus, New Jersey's current policy of jailing an individual who cannot pay, for instance, \$500 bail, can cost New Jersey taxpayers more than \$30,000—just while that person awaits a trial.

In addition, the jailed person is separated from his or her family physically, emotionally and financially, further exacerbating the challenges this individual and family face. New Jersey's current bail system punishes the poor with a ten-month sentence before they ever have their day in court. It bases pretrial release decisions on resources rather than risk. This is immoral and dangerous.

There is nothing more important than protecting the safety and well-being of our communities. To that end we urge you to support S946 / A1910.

Sincerely,

Pastor Bryant Ali, New Psalmist Worship Center

Rev. Darrell Armstrong, Shiloh Baptist Church

Rev. Gedeon Aybar, Iglesia El Shaddai, Jersey City

Rev. Gregory Bezilla, Chaplain, Episcopal Campus Ministry, Rutgers University

Rev. William Caban, Defender of Christian Faith, Bayonne

Rev. William Coleman, Second Baptist Church, Asbury Park

Rev. Errol Cooper, First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens

Rabbi Pennie Cordobes, Congregation B'nai Jeshurun

Rev. Gabriel Cuervo, The Nazarine Church, Jersey City

Pastor Keith Davis, Evangelism Today Christian Church

Rev. Doris Glaspy, Roseville Presbyterian Church, Newark

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***Bail Reform
Faith Leader Letter of Support***

Rev. Carol S. Haag, Unitarian Universalist Minister, retired Murray Grove Stewardship Committee Chair
Pastor Karen Hernandez-Granzen, Westminster Presbyterian, Trenton

Rev. Craig Hirshberg, UU Legislative Ministry of New Jersey

Pastor Francis Huber, First Christian Assembly

Pastor Verenander L. Hughes, Bethel Baptist Church

Rev. Robert Janis-Dillon, First Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Hunterdon County

Rev. Gerald Kugler, St. John Lutheran Church, Union City

Rev. Sara Lillja, Lutheran Office of Governmental Ministry

Rev. Jose Lopez, Iglesia Cristiana Avivamiento Pentacostal Church

Dr. Calvin McKinney, National Baptist Convention

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Rev. Bill Neely, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Princeton

Rev. Dana P. Owens, Messiah Baptist Church, East Orange

Rabbi Karen Perolman, Congregation B'nai Jeshurun

Rev. Juan Peterson, Angel Visit Baptist Church

Rev. Sunilda Ramos, Iglesia Del Avivamiento, Union City

Rev. Tomas Reyes, Iglesia Fuente De Salvacion, Jersey City

Rev. John Rice, Love Fellowship MBC

Rev. Bruno Rodriguez, Church of God, Jersey City

Pastor Leroy Scott, Faith Christian Counseling Center, Trenton

Rabbi Howard Stahl, Congregation B'nai Jeshurun

Rabbi Joshua Stanton, Congregation B'nai Jeshurun

Rev. JerQuentin Sutton, Social Action Chair, United Missionary Baptist Convention, Inc.

Rev. Ariel Torres, Monte Sinai, Newark

Rev. David Torres, The Path to Heaven, Long Branch

Pastor Austin Whitaker, Calvary Community Rebirth Ministries

Pastor Vanessa Wilson, Magnolia Road Church, Pemberton