

The Honorable Toni Preckwinkle  
Cook County Board President  
118 N. Clark Street – Rm. 537  
Chicago, Illinois 60602

Dear President Preckwinkle,

I am writing to ask Cook County officials to dramatically lower the number of people in jail in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As we know, the Cook County Jail has become a hot spot for the transmission of this virus. Many of the people currently being held are there because they are unable to afford to post bail. These individuals are presumed innocent in American law. It is unjust to expose them to the kind of risk that being incarcerated currently presents. Others have committed low-level offenses which do not justify the kind of risk of infection presents to them.

I am writing as a rabbi, a religious leader in the Jewish faith. Jewish tradition is very concerned with the proper administration of justice, as we read in the book of Leviticus: "You shall commit no injustice in judgment. Do not show favor to the poor nor deference to the rich. You shall judge your fellow with righteousness." Jewish tradition values the life of all people, seeing each individual life as having value. From this perspective, putting lives at risk in this way is a perversion of justice and should not be tolerated.

Therefore, I call on elected officials to dramatically reduce the number of people in Cook County jail in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, Cook County officials must expedite bail hearings, curb new admissions to jail, and release all pre-trial detainees who are qualified for bail, as well as others who have not been found to be a safety risk to someone else.

With great appreciation for your work and continued prayers for your health and safety,

Rabbi Shoshanah Conover

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