

## **ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITY - Dismantling Racism**

### ***Is a wealthier person who has been arrested less dangerous to the community?***

On any given day in Michigan, about 8,000 people are in jail without ever having been convicted of a crime. They are being held because they can't afford to post bail. Many were arrested for minor civil infractions, ordinance violations or misdemeanors, and criminal traffic offenses (excluding drunken driving).

Often, people who have been arrested are required to post cash for their release – in other words, *to buy their freedom*. If they cannot raise the money, they must stay in jail while awaiting trial. This creates an unjust legal system in which the freedom of a person who is presumed innocent *depends entirely on how much money they have*.

Locking people up while they await trial devastates lives – it leads to job loss, child custody issues, eviction, and missed medical or educational commitments. It also coerces many defendants to plead guilty *just to get out of jail*, not because they actually are guilty. And Michigan taxpayers are paying to incarcerate these people while they await trial.

Fortunately, a package of reform bills is in the Judiciary Committee of the Michigan House of Representatives. These bills would help end unnecessary jail time, when appropriate. The bills also would decriminalize some low-level traffic offenses, eliminate mandatory minimum jail sentences, and reduce the number of violations required to suspend a driver's license.

**You can be an advocate for those who are too poor to buy their freedom while awaiting trial.** Please contact the following members of the House Judiciary Committee and ask them to support **HB 5436-5443**.

Graham Filler (R) 517-373-1778; Bronna Kahle (R) 517-373-1706; Mike Mueller (R) 517-373-1780; Doug Wozniak (R) 517-373-0843; and Steve Johnson (R) 517-373-0840