Media and Experts Agree: Bail Is Broken, and New Jersey’s Bail Reform Is Working

“We’ve changed the system now, so that if you are poor in this state and are charged with a crime, you should not have to stay in jail for being poor … Being poor is not a crime.” — Gov. Chris Christie

“You look at who’s in jail and there is this real shift. More and more the people locked up in jail are the ones who’ve been convicted of crimes, instead of just accused of them… More in More in New Jersey, punishment comes after conviction, not before.” — NPR’s Planet Money

“This is groundbreaking, earth-shaking kind of reform for criminal justice in the state of New Jersey, certainly the deepest and most significant reform that I’ve lived for and maybe the most significant in the history of the state.” — Attorney General Christopher Porrino

“If you’re incarcerating people for failure to pay fines and fees because they can’t make bail, it’s unnecessarily expensive,” — Nancy Fishman, a project director at the Vera Institute, a nonprofit policy research organization.

 “[B]ail reform seems to be working. Jail populations are down, people’s lives are not unraveling because they're sitting in jail for a lack of bail money and, in some way, this moves us closer to the ideal that people are innocent until proven guilty.” — Bridgeton Mayor Albert B. Kelly

“Note that under the old system of money bail, judges didn’t even have the option of forcibly detaining those deemed a danger…Meanwhile, thousands of minority defendants who posed no risk were stuck in jail for months simply because they were poor…Now, a risk assessment is done based on criminal history. A prosecutor can request detention, and the judge makes the final call. To suggest that a computer decides your fate with no judicial discretion, or that you can simply lie your way out, is nonsense.” — Star Ledger editorial board

“Critics of money bail argue that it has led to an unconstitutional, two-tiered system of pretrial justice, allowing wealthy people to buy their freedom while poorer, often low-level defendants are left to languish behind bars before any determination of guilt…New Jersey’s reform has already had a notable effect on the number of people being held in jails… the pre-trial jail population has dropped by 20 percent from the same time last year, with nearly 1,500 fewer people awaiting trial behind bars.” — Huffington Post

“The transition has been remarkably smooth and for the first time low-risk defendants no longer have to linger in jail for months, in some cases years at a time because they cannot afford to post even modest amounts of bail,” — Judge Glenn Grant, Acting Administrative Director of the Courts

“Our new system enables us to protect the public by detaining the most dangerous offenders, while avoiding the costs, both fiscal and social, of warehousing indigent non-violent offenders in jail pending trial,” — Elie Honig, director of the state Division of Criminal Justice