Wayne County Commission approves measure calling for jail bond reform

A resolution by Wayne County Commission Chair Alisha Bell supporting revisions in Michigan’s bail bond system was unanimously approved today by the full Commission.

The resolution expresses strong opposition to the current system, in which some defendants are held in jail solely for lacking the financial resources to post bail before they go to trial. It also strongly supports the bipartisan bill package in the Michigan House and Senate (HB 4351 - HB 4360 and SB 207 - SB 215) that would reform the state’s bail system with regard to money bail, also known as cash bail or a secured bond.

In addition, the resolution supports and calls for expansion of a Michigan Supreme Court pretrial pilot program, currently enacted in the 31st District Court in Hamtramck as well as four other courts throughout the state, designed to limit the amount of time financially challenged individuals spend in jail before they face trial.

Chair Bell has made cash bail reform a key part of her Wayne County legislative agenda for 2019.

“It’s unfair that for people facing the same charges, one can be sent home while another has to stay in jail,” Chair Bell said.
Last year, Chair Bell was instrumental in securing approval of a similar resolution as President of the National Association of Black County Officials. She also played an important role in the passage of another similar approval in her current role as Chair of the Committee on Justice & Public Safety of the National Organization of Counties.

“This is an issue that is growing across the country, county by county, state by state,” Chair Bell said.

The Wayne County resolution noted that the use of money bail has increased over the past two decades as has the number of jail inmates being held in advance of their trial, with pretrial inmates making up 62 percent of the nation’s jail population.

Of those, 90 percent are neither considered a flight risk or danger to the public.

“Instead, the most common reason why an individual remains incarcerated pretrial is simply because he or she could not muster the financial resources needed to secure his or her freedom,” the resolution states.