



April 13, 2020

We want to give a huge shout out to the East Baton Rouge Office of the Public Defender led by District Defender Michael Mitchell and Deputy in Chief Lindsay Blouin. This office led the charge of dropping the jail population by 44% in recent weeks. Unfortunately, Louisiana's incarceration rate is the highest in the country and it goes without saying that Louisiana chooses to incarcerate an extremely high number of people who would otherwise qualify for non-monetary bonds.

On March 13th, our office was confronted with the news that due to COVID-19 our courts would be shutting down that coming Monday. Over the weekend, our office went through over a thousand cases where clients were in jail to prepare arguments for the release of as many people as possible come Monday, March 16th. Led by Pretrial and Social Services Supervisor, Lacie Dauzat (Class of 2016), our bond team armed public defenders with the necessary tools to begin to aggressively fight for clients to get home to their families.

During that first week, public defenders focused on pushing to get as many of our clients as possible out of parish prison on non-monetary bonds. In some of those cases, we were able to get cooperation from the District Attorney's Office. However, when many other clients continued to face unaffordable bonds, our office kept looking for solutions. When courts said "no" to non-monetary bonds or bond reductions, we had amazing community partners ready to bail our clients out of the jail. The next week, YWCA and Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights bailed out 27 of our clients. The Bail Project is continuing to work to get more clients out of jail.

Since that time, we have continued to file bond reductions, make aggressive release arguments, hold daily meetings with the District Attorney's Office, and call on community partners to push for our clients to be released from the jail. We are not close to being finished. There are now several confirmed cases of COVID in our local parish prison and we still have many clients sitting in jail that should not be there. However, we are extremely proud to work for an administration and alongside so many colleagues who shown dedication, hard work, and aggressive client-centered advocacy in the effort to get over 500 people out of jail in the past 3 weeks. We will continue to fight.

**Story Provided By:**

**Alaina Boothe (Class of 2017)**  
**Lacie Dauzat (Class of 2016)**  
**Elizabeth Warner (Class of 2017)**  
**Stephen Stanford (Class of 2017)**  
**Harry Landry (Class of 2017)**  
**Ashley Messina (Class of 2018)**  
**Marshall Thomas (Class of 2018)**  
**Kristen Richardson (Class of 2018)**  
**Emily Lubin (Class of 2019)**  
**David Hogan (Class of 2019)**