

## **Mecklenburg County 2020 Safety and Justice Challenge Fact Sheet**

### ***We've got a problem to fix:***

- Despite efforts to reduce the Mecklenburg County jail population over the past three years, there is still an over-reliance on incarceration for defendants.
- Too often, a jail stay depends on an ability to pay. Although we've increased the use of non-financial conditions of release, jail stays still too often depend on ability to pay.
- Pretrial release and length of stay are main drivers of the jail population. The average pretrial jail population alone was 63 percent of the total average daily population in 2019.
- Despite making up approximately 46 percent of the local population, African Americans and Hispanics make up 78 percent of the jail population.

### ***There are proposed solutions to create a fairer, more effective local justice system:***

- Supported with an additional \$1 million from the Safety and Justice Challenge, Mecklenburg County will continue to implement forward-looking, smart solutions to further reduce the local jail population by a total of 17 percent over the next two years.
- To continue safely reducing the jail population, the County plans to implement strategies aimed at addressing system inefficiencies, enhancing existing services, providing non-jail alternatives for low-risk defendants, and increasing community engagement in local justice system reform.
- This will include enhancing services provided to defendants pretrial, implementing more meaningful first appearance hearings and improving case processing, and partnering with residents to identify and implement community-led programs and policy interventions.
- Strategies will touch all points of the system. These policy-driven innovations will reduce jail bed usage while ensuring the County advances its commitment to only holding in custody those who pose a safety risk to the community, ensuring the County advances its commitment to public safety while providing access to critically needed services.

### ***Who is helping to affect change?***

- The strategies and initiatives outlined in the Safety and Justice Challenge are being led by Mecklenburg County Criminal Justice Services in partnership with the County Manager's Office, Office of District Court Judges, District Attorney's Office, Public Defender's Office, Chief Magistrate's Office, Clerk of Superior Court, Sheriff's Office, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, and law enforcement agencies in the Towns of Huntersville, Cornelius, Davidson, Pineville, Mint Hill, and Matthews.
- This work is supported by seven sub-committees, which focus on issues ranging from racial and ethnic disparities to evidence-based practices and technology, and are comprised of various representatives from the legal system, law enforcement, and community-based organizations.