

News**Rep. Danny Davis (D-Illinois) Introduces Bail Reform Bill**

Davis' bill seeks to alleviate some of the financial burdens and inequities associated with money bail

By **Lauren Victoria Burke** (NNPA Newswire Contributor)

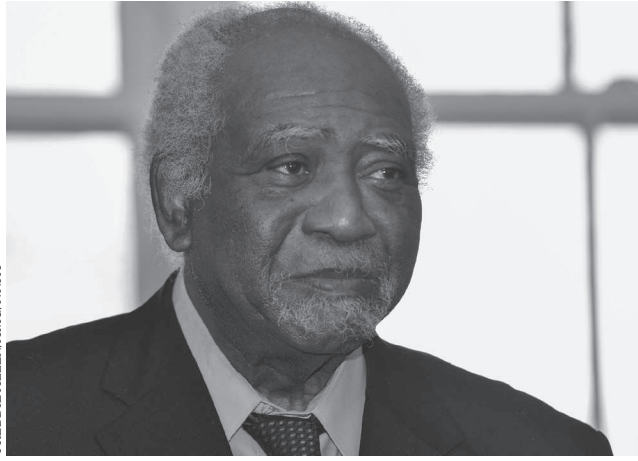
During a recent press conference on Capitol Hill, Rep. Danny Davis (D-Ill.) said that at any given time there are roughly 500,000 people sitting in local jails waiting for their day in court.

"These are people who have been charged with a crime, but are not convicted," said Davis. "Many of the people waiting in jail are forced to wait, simply because they cannot afford to post bail."

On January 18, Davis introduced the Bail Fairness Act of 2018 to alleviate some of the burdens associated with the cash bail system.

The Chicago congressman was joined on Capitol Hill by Reps. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-Texas) and Dwight Evans (D-Pa.) and Chicago businessman and philanthropist Dr. Willie Wilson. The four of them were flanked by two large posters; one poster read: "Taxpayers Spend \$17 billion on Pre-trial Detentions"; the other poster simply said, "Bail Fail" in large letters. Wilson said that he has paid the bails of non-violent Cook County Corrections inmates who were too poor to bail themselves out.

Davis' legislation would require states



Rep. Danny Davis (D-Ill.) recently held a press conference to introduce the "Bail Fairness Act of 2018" on Capitol Hill.

to release individuals charged with a non-violent misdemeanor on non-monetary conditions prior to their court date.

Civil rights groups and lawmakers are increasingly putting pressure on businesses operating in the cash bail system and becoming more vocal about problems in the industry.

As more cities begin to do away with the cash bail practice, some federal legislators are taking notice. Senators Kamala Harris (D-Calif.) and Cory Booker (D-N.J.) have voiced similar concerns regarding the problems of money bail in the Senate. In September 2017, Harris joined with Republican Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.) on the Pre-trial Integrity and Safety Act. The bill would overhaul America's bail system just as Rep. Davis' legislation hopes to do.

A May 2017 report by Color of Change and the ACLU entitled, "Selling Off Our Freedom: How Insurance Corporations Have Taken Over Our Bail System," outlined the for-profit incentives behind the bail system in America.

The report revealed that there are fewer than 10 companies involved in the administration of over \$14 billion in bonds posted by for-profit bail each year. The bail industry collects approximately \$2 billion in profit, annually.

"The result of bail corporations' control is that millions of people are no longer free: people stuck in jail and families stuck in debt to create profit for these corporations," the report read. The study also pointed out that, "the national median for bail for a felony ar-

rest is now \$10,000, while the Federal Reserve has found that nearly half of Americans would be un-

able to pay for an unexpected expense of \$400." The United States remains number one in the world in the rate of incarceration, with over two million people behind bars, in large part, because poor people are unable to pay their way out of incarceration. The money bail system disproportionately impacts the poor. There are currently over 43 million Americans living under the poverty line; nearly 30 percent of African Americans live in poverty.

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"The original purpose

of bail was to serve as an incentive to return to court when a person is arrested, released, and their case proceeds. However, the current money bail system has little to do with this original intent...people with money can almost always buy their way to freedom, regardless of the charges against them," wrote ACLU Deputy National Political Director Udi Ofer on December 11, 2017.

Rep. Davis has continued to focus on justice reform issues during his 20 years in Congress. Davis' "Second Chance Act" was signed into law by President George W. Bush in 2007. The legis-

lation assisted formerly incarcerated individuals to successfully re-enter society.

In November 2016, after his 15-year-old grandson was murdered in Chicago, Rep. Davis pushed for more funding for neighborhoods struggling with poverty. His focus was on the "10-20-30" policy proposed by South Carolina Rep. Jim Clyburn. The "10-20-30" plan would focus cash on 10 percent of all government funding to be allocated to areas where 20 percent of the residents have lived in poverty for over 30 years.

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Chicago Public Schools Working to Close Achievement Gap

Students in Chicago Public Schools Learning Faster than their Peers

By **Stacy M. Brown** (NNPA Newswire Contributor)

Students in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) system are learning faster than just about

any other school district in the nation, according to new research.

Research provided by Stanford Professor Sean Reardon shows that students in the Windy City have gained six years of learning in just five years.

Reardon based his analysis on 300 million elementary school test scores covering more than 11,000 school districts.

"I don't think CPS is doing anything extraordinary or special for parent engagement, but it may be worth pointing out that we're suddenly leading the nation in student growth and our kids of color are outperforming comparable kids of color across the state," said Marilyn Rhames, the founder of the non-profit Teachers Who Pray and a veteran teacher in Chicago.

Still, Rhames, author of the upcoming book, "The Master Teacher: 12 Spiritual Lessons that can Transform Schools and Revolutionize Public Education," cautioned that there's another side to the success story that shouldn't be overlooked.

"There's a huge race-based disparity of performance on the SAT, which all 11th graders in the state of Illinois has to take," Rhames said.

"Some CPS high schools did the worst in the state. So, how effective is our growth, if it's not translating into better preparation for college?"

But, it's not just about test scores, student attendance is up, Chicago high schools are offering more rigorous courses and high school graduation and college enrollment rates continue to rise, said Elaine Allensworth of the Chicago Consortium on School Research.

The consortium has provided a descriptive examination of two- and four-year college enrollment patterns among CPS graduates over the last 10 years.

They found that CPS graduates' immediate college enrollment rates increased over the last decade, with 63 percent of 2015 graduates enrolling in either a two- or four-year college immediately after high school, compared to 50 percent of graduates in 2006.

In 2015, CPS graduates' rate of enrollment in four-year colleges was equal to the national rate at 44 percent, and higher than some urban districts, including New York and Los Angeles, which were 38 percent and 24 percent, respec-

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