

Press Release: For Immediate Release — May 1st, 2020

Press contacts: Nick Hopkins - (812) 890-8618, Peter Sentz, Molly Galloway — Champaign County Bailout Coalition, champaign.county.bail.out@gmail.com,

Champaign County Bailout Coalition Noise Demonstration Rally Demanding Decarceration of Jails during COVID-19 Pandemic

Champaign County Bailout Coalition is holding a noise-demonstration rally at Canaday Park to keep pressure on Champaign County officials to release as many people as possible and help contain the spread of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

This demonstration follows more than a month of community phone calls and an open letter to the offices of Sheriff Dustin Heurman, State's Attorney Julia Reitz, and Presiding Judge Thomas Difanis demanding that they take measures to release as many people as possible from the local jails and minimize the number of people incarcerated at a time when the Center for Disease Control recommends social distancing practices to protect public health.

“We are only hearing of more cases [of COVID-19] in jails and prisons all over the country.” said CCBC member Phillip Ernstmeyer. “The silence from public officials on the safety of community members they are responsible for is troubling.”

This socially distant noise-demonstration rally will take place this Friday, May 1st at 6:00 PM. As a community, we have yet to hear of a publicly accountable plan from Champaign County officials about protecting our community members from the spread of COVID-19 in and from the local jails. We have not heard about plans to decarcerate the jails for public health, to fully embrace notices to appear in court rather than incarceration as a health measure, or to enact socially distant bail procedures so that community members can free their loved ones by phone and/or online for their health and safety.

“There are vulnerable detainees, correctional officers, staff, and community members who are there to bail out loved ones at the jail every day. There is plenty of traffic in and out of the jails and more opportunities for infection to spread in our county” said Elisabeth Horan of CCBC. “We need Champaign County officials to say enough — to put the pressure on judges to release community members from these jails for the safety of our entire community.”

.....
For more information:

<https://champaigncountybailoutcoalition.wordpress.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/ChampaignCountyBailoutCoalition/>

<https://twitter.com/CUBailout>