

# GEORGIA VOTERS WANT COMMONSENSE PRETRIAL JUSTICE REFORM

Georgia is among the nation’s leading states when it comes to putting people in jail. For every 100,000 Georgians, 585 are in jail—and 312 of those are in pretrial detention; the national average pretrial detention rate, by comparison, is 210 per 100,000.<sup>1</sup> In 2017, Georgia was one of 17 states to receive a failing grade from the Pretrial Justice Institute in its report titled “The State of Pretrial Justice in America”. A new poll from PJI shows that Georgia voters want changes at the pretrial stage—at the front door—of their criminal justice system.

## GEORGIA VOTERS ARE READY FOR CHANGE

- 91% of registered Georgia voters are dissatisfied with the criminal justice system; 66% want either a complete overhaul or major reforms. 74% of African-American voters in Georgia want a complete overhaul or major reform.
- 84% of Georgia voters, including 97% of African Americans, believe the wealthy enjoy substantially better criminal justice outcomes than do poor and working-class people.

## GEORGIA VOTERS WANT COMMUNITY-BASED SUPPORTS

- 53% believe that community-based supports are fairer to people of all races than money bail.
- Georgia voters endorse services for people who are awaiting trial in the community:
  - 82% favor education and counseling to help people appear in court and not get arrested on new charges during the pretrial period.
  - 89% favor services before trial for victims of domestic violence.
  - 90% favor services during the pretrial period for people with mental health needs.

**82% favor education and counseling**

**89% support services for victims of domestic violence**

**90% favor mental health services**

## GEORGIA VOTERS SUPPORT DETENTION ONLY WHEN IT PROTECTS PUBLIC SAFETY

- Most Georgia voters (71%) would limit how long a person could be jailed before trial on non-serious offenses.
- When asked what should be the deciding factor in pretrial release decisions—public safety or court appearance—Georgia voters overwhelmingly chose public safety (76%) over court appearance (10%).
- Nearly eight in 10 Georgia voters (78%) would reduce the number of arrests for low-level, nonviolent offenses by issuing citations rather than making arrests.

Unnecessary pretrial detention due to a person’s inability to pay money bail has serious consequences. It can cost people their jobs, housing, education, health—even custody of children. As [few as three days in jail](#) can make some people more likely to offend in the future.

Georgia voters care about these issues and are ready for their leaders to work for change.

1. Data from Vera Institute Incarceration Trends: <http://trends.vera.org/incarceration-rates?data=pretrial>