



**Dane County, WI**  
210 MLK Jr. Blvd, Madison, WI 53703



April 30, 2020

Deputy Director Kristen Mahoney  
Bureau of Justice Assistance  
Washington, DC  
Kristen.Mahoney@usdoj.gov  
Via email

Dear Deputy Director Mahoney,

Dane County, Wisconsin is ready to create a new community court with a grounding in procedural justice, racial equity, and improved public safety. The County has completed substantial work in preparation for a community court, including peer-to-peer site visits, unique partnerships with community and stakeholders, as well as research and consensus building.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has not only had a fundamental impact on all aspects of life for our residents, but also on the county's capacity to take on a project of this scope at this time. The County's fiscal situation, like those of our peer counties, is challenged by a steep loss of revenue and the demand for new services. Dane County has been the strongest economic growth engine in the State of Wisconsin for the last decade or more. Yet, at this time, our fiscal forecast and staffing capacity is stressed.

To apply and win an opportunity to create a new program while we are facing the worst economic conditions in a decade—and perhaps a lifetime—would be irresponsible to each one of our residents. Moreover, it would be inappropriate to compete for federal funding without the confidence that we would be able to deliver the intended results.

Instead, we implore you to consider funding opportunities for existing justice innovations that BJA has invested in, such as the Dane County Community Restorative Court. Please read a recent blog that appeared in NTTAC:  
<https://bjatta.bja.ojp.gov/media/blog/creating-model-community-restorative-courts-dane-county-wisconsin>

Data demonstrates that the COVID – 19 crisis does not level the playing field, but instead reveals a greater racial equity gap in health, economic condition, and justice. The Dane County Community Restorative Court, on the other hand, is achieving greater racial equity and public safety for Dane County residents.

We humbly ask that you consider the initiatives that BJA has helped create—and yield the benefits of that support on a larger scale. Please contact CJC Coordinator Colleen Clark Bernhardt, 608-266-3022, with any questions.

Sincerely,

Joseph T. Parisi, County Executive  
Ismael Ozanne, District Attorney  
Carlo Esqueda, Clerk of Courts  
Valerie Baily-Rihn, Presiding Judge  
Dave Mahoney, Sheriff  
Analiese Eicher, Dane County Board Chair  
Todd Meurer, Municipal Judge

John Patterson, Asst. Chief, MPD  
Catherine Dorl, Public Defender  
Troy Enger, Dept. of Corrections  
Aaron Chapin, Chief, Shorewood PD  
Maureen McCarville, Public Protection  
Cameron McLay, Deputy Mayor, Madison