

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-1013

February 9, 2023

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Fani T. Willis  
Fulton County District Attorney  
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Flynn D. Broady, Jr.  
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Darius Pattillo  
Henry County District Attorney  
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Dear District Attorney Mosley, Broady, Racine, Willis, Broader, and Pattillo:

I write as the elected representative of Georgia's thirteenth congressional district, to request each of your offices expand the use of accountability courts. Accountability courts are a proven means to administer justice and reduce the current backlog of cases in Georgia's criminal court system. While I understand that the choice to enroll in accountability courts is voluntary, I urge you to encourage all eligible defendants to enter accountability programs to provide them with immediate structure and clarity to resolve their charges.

Accountability courts emphasize rehabilitation for offenders through treatment, mutual dialogue, and recovery initiatives. Accountability courts apply to specific needs, including drug courts, family treatment courts, mental health courts, driving under the influence (DUI) courts, and veterans' treatment courts. These courts give individuals the necessary resources to overcome their struggles, regain their lives, and reenter their communities as contributing members of society. I am heartened by this approach that focuses on underlying addiction or mental health struggles first, with a program tailored to withstand individual mistakes and provide opportunities for full rehabilitation.

Studies have shown that accountability courts are effective on many levels. A 2017 report from the Council of Accountability Court Judges (CACJ) found that accountability court participants are 12 % less likely to reoffend than those who are released from traditional incarceration.<sup>1</sup> For accountability court program graduates, a report found recidivism rates to be even lower, at 15 % nationally. In specific program terms, a report from the CACJ found that mental health court participants are 31.2 % less likely to reoffend than those who are released from traditional incarceration.<sup>2</sup> Further data from mental health, drug, and veterans' courts shows that

<sup>1</sup> "Accountability Court Program." Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, [Access link here](#).

<sup>2</sup> Meyer, Rachel. Council of Accountability Court Judges, Data & Research Program Manager, 2023.

accountability court participants are at reduced risk of both felony arrest and probation violations in the three years following their involvement with the court.

A Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) CACJ report found that enhancing the use of accountability courts saves the state an average of \$13,667 in total costs per program participant, compared to incarceration.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, court graduates produce an average of \$25,291 and a total of \$41 million, in annual economic benefits through taxes, avoided costs, crime victimization savings, adjudication and incarceration savings, and community service work. In the thirteenth congressional district alone, 256 adult program graduates accounted for a savings of \$6.6 million. 91 % of program enrollees were employed by the time they graduated—providing a structure for individuals to learn new skills and gain financial security. Georgia accountability courts graduated 1,592 individuals during FY22, a promising figure with the potential for increase. Beyond the numbers, accountability courts give people necessary second chances, keep families together, and serve as pillars of positive reform in our criminal justice system.

I urge you to continue working with the CACJ to ensure Georgia’s judicial system is efficiently dealing with the backlog of cases and to encourage collaboration between courts across the state to ensure best practices are being utilized. In last year’s State of the Judiciary address to the Georgia General Assembly, then Chief Justice of the Georgia Supreme Court David Nahmias voiced concern over the current backlog of cases caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Chief Justice Nahmias told the General Assembly that the case backlog “will be the main issue that the judicial system of Georgia will be dealing with, not only until the rest of our society returns to more normal conditions, but for several years to come.”<sup>4</sup>

The Georgia Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) recently announced that up to \$110 million of *American Rescue Plan Act* (ARPA) funding will be disbursed to local court systems to address the overflow of cases.<sup>5</sup> This funding will be disbursed by the Judicial Council of Georgia Ad Hoc Committee on ARPA Funding (“ARPA Committee”) and I encourage you to work with the Committee to secure funding for your office. Please contact my office for assistance in applying for these ARPA Committee grants. I would be happy to offer support through letters of recommendation, help with grant deadlines, and any other aid that my office can provide.

I thank you again for your work in serving the residents of Georgia’s thirteenth congressional district. I welcome a response regarding the current effectiveness and potential expansion of the use of accountability courts within your jurisdiction, and any plans your office has to access the ARPA grant funding. I look forward to your responses by **February 28, 2023**.

Sincerely,



David Scott  
Member of Congress

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<sup>3</sup> “CACJ FY22 Annual Report.” Council of Accountability Court Judges, [Access link here](#).

<sup>4</sup> Rankin, Bill. “Chief Justice Warns of Mounting Case Backlogs Due to Pandemic.” AJC, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 8 Feb. 2022, [Access link here](#).

<sup>5</sup> “American Rescue Plan Act Grant Funding for Georgia’s Judicial Branch.” JC/AOC, Georgia AOC, 19 Jan. 2023, [Access link here](#).