

District Attorney Candidates' Assembly Proposals

April 26, 2022

We urge the Orange-Chatham District Attorney's Office to implement and act on policies that promote transparency and consistency, reduce incarceration and unnecessary interactions with the criminal justice system, and end racial and wealth-based disparities. Policies that increase fairness, compassion, and stability for the individual benefit our entire community by reducing exorbitant costs, housing and job loss, and by maintaining family integrity.

To achieve this, we ask the next District Attorney to enact the following policies:

1.) Transparency & Consistency

- Create a publicly-available policy statement (to include policies re: diversion, plea deals, and charging and sentencing choices) and work with either UNC's Criminal Justice Innovation Lab and/or the Duke Wilson Center for Science and Justice to gather data on plea deals and to track for racial disparities.
- Create a Sentencing Review Committee (to include both stakeholders in the Orange-Chatham criminal justice system as well as community members). This committee would review the cases of individuals incarcerated on prison sentences prosecuted by the Office to determine if sentencing relief is appropriate and would enhance equity and justice.

2.) Reduction of Incarceration & Involvement with Criminal Justice System

- Decline to prosecute drug possession for personal use and drug paraphernalia charges.
- Implement mass relief for driver's license suspensions, as has been done in other North Carolina counties.
- Make diversion the rule. If charges must be pursued, prioritize diversion over incarceration during all phases of the process—both during pre-trial and if parole is deemed necessary. When diversion is not an option, allow those with no prior or with minimal records to enter a First Offender Deferred Prosecution Agreement or a Conditional Discharge to dismiss the case.

3.) Implement Policies to End Racially-Biased and Wealth-Based Pretrial Detention

Do not request cash bail except for violent misdemeanor or violent felony offenses where there is substantial risk of great bodily harm to an individual or the community. When cash bail is requested under these limited, high-risk circumstances, align cash bail amounts with the accused's ability to pay.

We also ask for the next District Attorney to agree to:

1. **The continuance of the diversion program** for drivers whose only offense is driving without a license.
2. **Follow-up meetings** in six months and one year.