

# NATIONAL BAIL FUND NETWORK

## CORE PRINCIPLES

2022 UPDATE

*These are our core principles which have evolved as we have grown together as a Network since 2016. These principles are goals that we are constantly striving towards.*

### OVERVIEW

The member community bail/bond funds of the National Bail Fund Network manifest our vision of freedom and abolishing the prison industrial complex in ways as varied as our contexts. Our principles express key shared analysis and commitments. These shared principles guide us through decision-making, prioritization, and the threats of co-optation and false solutions.

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# CORE PRINCIPLES

## OUR DEMAND IS FREEDOM.

- We believe that this means the abolition of the prison industrial complex (PIC), including the abolition of the criminalization of migration and the deportation system.
- We reject physical jails and prisons and all “alternatives to incarceration” or “alternatives to detention,” including ankle monitors, house arrest, forced case management & program compliance, and other surveillance tools that expand the reach of the carceral state.
- We reject and actively work towards ending all forms of pre-trial and immigration incarceration, deportation, and surveillance, not just an end to money bail/bond.

## WE BELIEVE THAT TACTICAL AND STRATEGIC EXPERIMENTATION IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF WORKING TOWARDS ABOLISHING ALL FORMS OF INCARCERATION AND CARCERAL CONTROL.

- We affirm that community bail/bond funds are a tactic towards ending the PIC and not a goal in and of themselves. We hold the challenge that this is true even when community bail/bond funds are sometimes a singular route to freedom for many in our communities.
- We know that the carceral system will attempt to co-opt our tactics. We pledge to be vigilant about remaining in tension with the system we are trying to dismantle, being aware that pushes to cooperate with the system or exist within the system’s rules challenge the tactic’s impact.
- There is no single right way for a community bail/bond fund to operate. Organizing to abolish incarceration will look different in every community. We believe that the experiences and knowledge of people who have been criminalized and incarcerated must inform our strategy. Building community power is a constant throughout all of our efforts and at the root of our work.
- We know that capacity and resources change and are committed to doing the best we can with the resources at hand. This often means community bail/bond funds have to reflect on the potential of the tactic, look at the other levers that are keeping people incarcerated, and adapt our tactics to meet the need.

## **WE BELIEVE IN SOLIDARITY, NOT CHARITY.**

- Our work as community bail/bond funds is built upon a belief in community solidarity and its structures of networks, reciprocity, and cooperation. We explicitly reject top-down charity models that necessitate judgment and control.
- We believe community bail/bond funds must take great care to acknowledge and mitigate the inherent power dynamic in the relationship between the bail/bond fund and the person for whom the fund pays bail or bond.
- We believe that we must be aware of the ways that pathologizing individual behavior, rather than focusing on the structures we are fighting to abolish, can be used to promote expanded social control. We reject the legitimization of the PIC that comes if bail/bond funds focus on “success” based on return & revolve rates; systems of judgment that categorize people into deserving vs. undeserving categories; and attempts to use false assessments of “risk,” which in reality reflect system-imposed patterns of criminalization, policing, charging, and punishment.
- We acknowledge that while community bail/bond funds can secure someone’s freedom through the payment of money bail/bond, we cannot solve or address all issues that arise because of our society’s deep organized abandonment. This means we must form an analysis of the current system, the conditions we are fighting, and be clear on our role within that fight.

## **WE BELIEVE OUR WORK AS COMMUNITY BAIL/BOND FUNDS MUST REFLECT THE ABOLITIONIST FUTURE WE ARE WORKING TOWARDS. WE DO NOT WANT TO RECREATE SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION AND TOOLS OF THE SYSTEM WE AIM TO DISMANTLE.**

- Our criteria as community bail/bond funds cannot be built upon the system’s judgment or divisions. We will not follow the PIC’s aim to link people’s freedom to a system of supervision and social control.
- We are building towards a new future that will not be automatic. We see our work as part of a process that is building towards a new horizon and understand that there will not be a single substitution or solution. We know this means we constantly have to evaluate, and be ready for hard choices, about whether incremental reforms are creating more freedom or actually expanding the power of the PIC.