



THE BAIL PROJECT

Job Description **Court Advocate**

Position: Court Advocate

Reports To: Participatory Defense/MBFC Coordinator

Position Summary:

In partnership with the Bail Project, the People's Advocacy Institute hosts the Mississippi Bail Fund Collective which is a coalition of directly impacted people, organizations, social workers, legal professionals and community members committed to ending wealth based detention and creating a better system of justice that fosters change, stability and a better quality of life for all people.

The MBFC Court Advocate is a community member committed to racial and economic justice. They are the core, securing people's release, disrupting injustices within the criminal legal system, and fighting mass incarceration. We are expanding operations in Mississippi and looking for a court advocate to support our growing team on the ground!

About People's Advocacy Institute (PAI):

By providing legal support and engaging communities in participatory defense, electoral justice efforts, People's Assemblies, alternative to incarceration initiatives, and an intentional grassroots process for cultivating ideas and developing solutions PAI, inspires self-determination and community-driven solutions to crime and punitive legal systems and social injustice facing far too many communities. We believe that community agency is what architects robust systems change and is what is needed to build new institutional power that paves the way for a more just system rooted in restoration, resilience and self-determination.

The Context

The violence of the criminal justice system continues to injure people beyond their initial contact with police, to incarceration to the collateral consequences that prevent people from fully exercising their citizenship such as voting to employment, etc. For us, the connection of marching in the streets to oppose police violence, to standing with the community in the courtroom to challenge mass incarceration, to building communities' capacity to create the programs, policies and practices that foster community safety, joy and stability, go hand in hand. And we recognize that any effort to change the system must be led by the very people most impacted by the harm. That is why we have

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partnered with the [National Bail Out](#) (NBO) and [The Bail Project](#) (TBP), to provide bail support in Mississippi.

The Response

The People's Advocacy Institute, through its Mississippi Bail Fund Collective, provides free participatory legal defense including bail assistance, pretrial support and criminal defense guidance to help people take control of their own defense. We are on a mission to combat mass incarceration and demonstrate that a more humane, equitable, and effective system is possible.

The Model

The collateral consequences of being poor are not minor. As James Baldwin reminds us, 'being poor is very expensive.' There is no place in the criminal system where money more clearly buys justice than for one's criminal defense, starting with bail. People who can't afford bail remain in jail before trial, while those with money buy their liberty. Tying freedom to financial ability upends the presumption of innocence, tears lives apart, and perpetuates racial and economic disparities. It is also a key driver of mass incarceration, separation of families and divestment in communities. Each year, an estimated 2.5 million people sit in jail cells across America because they cannot afford bail. It is estimated that over 90 percent of people charged with a crime take a plea, not because they are guilty, but because they are scared of the trial process and can't afford a fully funded defense.

Our [Mississippi Bail Fund Collective](#) is a coalition of social workers, attorneys, and activists from across Mississippi working to address the injustices perpetrated by Mississippi's cash bail system. In partnership with the National Bail Out (NBO) and The Bail Project (TBP), we use a national revolving bail fund to pay bail for individuals who are legally presumed innocent, and whom a judge has deemed eligible for release. We then provide court reminders and work with local partner organizations to connect our clients with voluntary social services and community-based programs. We call this model Community Release with Support, and it has proven highly effective in helping people make their court dates. As our clients' cases close, bail comes back into the fund where it is recycled to help additional people.

Responsibilities:

- Court Advocates are tasked with posting bail for people who are lingering in jails simply because they can not afford to purchase their freedom.

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- Court Advocates pay bail from local courts and jails, meet with MBFC clients, remind them about upcoming court dates, and refer them to necessary services to support them after release.
- Interface with jail and prison staff to assess eligible bail candidates
- Learn jail databases and use to assess eligible bail candidates
- Interface with court staff to assess eligible bail candidates
- Interface with system stakeholders including district attorneys, defense attorneys, probation staff and other system stakeholders that impact bail
- Interface with community members to provide information on bail system and bail support services
- Complete needs assessments, intake forms, contact notes and other necessary client documentation
- Post bail for clients using bail funds provided by Mississippi Bail Fund
- Travel across the state of Mississippi and neighboring states to post bail, meet with clients and their families
- Visit clients in jail or prison in necessary
- In addition to securing our clients' freedom, Court Advocates uphold our holistic model by working within the local community and collaborating with our central management team in the fight against this system. This will entail collecting client and court data, giving clients an advocacy platform, and establishing local partnerships to expose the problems of the pretrial system that make MBFC's work necessary
- Our work will be widely published and made available to partner organizations that are focusing on advocacy, litigation, and legislation. By diligently cataloguing our results and empowering our clients to take center stage in the fight against mass incarceration, Bail Disruptors allow us to expose the injustices of our current wealth-based criminal legal system.

Qualifications:

You are driven, highly organized, and have a deep commitment to the Mississippi Bail Fund Collective's mission to eliminate race and wealth-based disparities in our criminal justice system. Applicants must be willing to work independently as well as in collaborative teams. Applicants may need to work non-traditional hours and will need to have access to a reliable vehicle. Travel is required across the state. A sense of humor, innovative spirit, and willingness to adapt to the change inherent to a rapidly scaling start-up are essential.

To excel in this role, you likely bring the following:

- Strong investment in the local community and in the fight for racial and economic justice
- Demonstrated interest and experience in racial and social justice or criminal legal reform

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- A self-motivated, flexible, and hard-working approach
- Excellent organizational abilities
- Strong decision-making and communication skills
- Basic ability in Google Docs, Excel, and a willingness to learn additional database tools
- Excellent organizational abilities and ability to handle multiple projects
- Extensive travel required

Salary

The base salary is \$45,000 with increase commensurate with experience.

Equal Opportunity Employer

The People's Advocacy Institute is home to the Mississippi Bail Fund Collective. We are proud to be an equal opportunity employer and actively seek the candidacy of people that have experienced incarceration/jail, people of color, women, LGBTQ people, people living with disabilities, and/or people that have experienced cash poverty.

To Apply

To apply, please send a **resume** and **cover letter** with the **subject line: COURT ADVOCATE** to info@peoplesadvocacyinstitute.com.

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