



# PFM's Center for Justice & Safety Finance

## WHY HAVE A CENTER FOR JUSTICE & SAFETY FINANCE?

Local governments are being called upon to re-examine the role of the criminal justice system and rethink policing in unprecedented ways. Many local governments need expert advice and assistance to understand the complexities of issues related to policy, operations and budget.

In 2017, PFM created the Center for Justice and Safety Finance to support state and local governments in developing and implementing safety and justice policies that are effective and efficient in the advancement of both civil rights and civil order. Without both civil rights and civil order, neither can be achieved. With our fiscal expertise, we know that the smartest budget policy is almost always the one that most advances justice.

### **Police and corrections are usually among the most significant areas of spending for local government.**

In many places, local governments have over-invested in law enforcement as a response to crime and underinvested in strategies to build communities and tackle inequality. As a result, in many cities and counties, spending on public safety and the criminal justice system is at or near 50% of the overall budget. We have successfully worked with local governments to better align budgeting with their broader justice and safety policy goals.

In New Orleans, where we served as the expert witness on the fiscal impacts of the consent decree for the Orleans Parish Prison, our analysis demonstrated that the single best way to achieve a cost-effective, constitutional jail was to reduce the size of the jail population.

As part of our work on multi-year budget planning and outcomes-based budgeting in local governments from Virginia to Illinois to Tennessee, we have crafted detailed initiatives. The initiatives are designed to reduce the cost of policing and corrections to free funds for investments in programs designed to provide early interventions that would address economic challenges and inequity.

### **State and local governments have become overly reliant on fine and fee revenue from the criminal justice system.**

Criminal justice fines and fees are a regressive poor tax and often have a disparate impact on Black and Latinx communities. These streams of revenue are typically “high pain” for the financial burdens that they impose, and “low gain” given the difficulty in collection.

With philanthropic support, we have worked with local governments to conduct the first-ever comprehensive reviews at the county level. In Ramsey County, Minnesota, our work led to the elimination of eleven fees by the County Board of Commissioners.

### **Too many law enforcement officers — both police and corrections officers — engage in misconduct.**

Sometimes that misconduct takes the form of discourtesy or a lack of respect and erodes the necessary partnership between the community and law enforcement. And, sometimes it results in bodily harm where the human costs are unspeakable. But, the cost to local government taxpayers is real as well as abusive behavior by law enforcement costs some cities millions of dollars and can put smaller cities on the brink of bankruptcy.

The Center team has worked with local governments across the nation on collective bargaining issues related to law enforcement. We have a deep understanding of how work and disciplinary rules can limit opportunities for reform. And we understand how financial incentives can work to promote greater transparency and accountability.



## HOW THE CENTER FOR JUSTICE & SAFETY FINANCE CAN HELP YOUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- Conducts comprehensive criminal justice system and departmental reviews.
- Supports local governments in outcomes-based budgeting and the development of multi-year financial plans, with a focus on the costs of law enforcement and opportunities for alternative investments.
- Analyzes the role of fines and fees in the criminal justice system and develops plans that allow local governments to reduce reliance on them as a source of revenue.
- Provides research and analysis for the development of new systems, policies and practices designed to improve law enforcement disciplinary processes and increase accountability

## LEADERS IN JUSTICE & SAFETY FINANCE

**Chloe Bohm** is a senior managing consultant at PFM with the Center. Prior to joining PFM in 2020, Chloe served as Executive Policy Specialist in the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections and as a budget analyst for the Pennsylvania House Appropriations Committee.

**Greg Butler** is a director at PFM who works with the Center on issues related to collective bargaining. He has assisted local governments across the nation on compensation, benefits, economic, and fiscal analyses; negotiation support, table-side strategic guidance, and expert witness testimony for collective bargaining proceedings.

**David Eichenthal** is managing director of PFM's Management and Budget Consulting practice and founder of the Center. Before joining PFM, David served in senior leadership positions in government and the non-profit sector, including as a chief financial officer of a mid-size city, in a series of senior policy positions with the City of New York and program director for a national organization of reform-oriented criminal prosecutors. David was formerly a research fellow at the Center for Research in Crime and Justice at NYU School of Law and on the executive committee of a national organization supporting offender re-entry.

**Sarah Schirmer** is executive director of the Center and a senior managing consultant at PFM. She leads the Center's work on fines and fees and is an expert on criminal justice policy. Before joining PFM, Sarah served as the criminal justice policy advisor to the former mayor of New Orleans and led the City's progress to reduce its jail population by more than 20%.

**Dr. Ronal Serpas** is a senior advisor to the Center. He formerly served as the chief of the Washington State Patrol, chief of police in Nashville, Tennessee and police superintendent of New Orleans, Louisiana. Nationally and internationally recognized for his expertise, Ron is the Professor of Practice for Criminology and Justice at Loyola University, former vice president – and now honorary president – of the International Association of Chiefs of Police; and co-chair of Law Enforcement Leaders to Reduce Crime and Incarceration.

**Caroline Sylvan** is a director at PFM who works with the Center on issues related to human services. She has led a series of projects related to operations and organization of social services agencies, with a particular focus on child welfare.

**Seth Williams** is deputy director of the Center and a senior managing consultant at PFM. Seth serves as the day-to-day project manager and analyst for numerous city and county criminal justice and public safety agencies throughout the nation. His work at PFM has helped reduce expenditures, increase efficiencies and outcomes, and redesign portions of criminal justice and public safety systems for a variety of government clients.

### To learn more, please contact:

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