



1000 FREED



AND COUNTING

2018-2024 BOND PROGRAM REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 2018, Envision Freedom Fund has been a leading force in the fight for immigrant rights, providing over \$8.8 million in bond assistance to free 1,000 individuals from ICE detention.

As the largest bond fund in the U.S. and the only one serving the Greater New York area, we are a critical lifeline to immigrants facing inhumane detention conditions, while also pursuing systemic changes to dismantle oppressive structures. By paying bonds, offering post-release support, and challenging racist systems, we reunite families and strengthen communities.

This report demonstrates the profound impact of our work, from improving court outcomes and disrupting the immigration detention system to advocating for transformative policies like the Dignity Not Detention Act and the Stop Immigration Bond Abuse Act. It also underscores the urgency of this work amidst rising bond amounts, hostile federal and state immigration policies, systemic inefficiencies, and escalating anti-immigrant rhetoric.

As we move forward, Envision Freedom remains committed to growing our bond fund while working toward a future where immigration detention no longer exists. Until that day, we will continue to provide a critical lifeline for those seeking freedom and justice.

“I'm happy to be free, because being locked up, well, no one deserves to be locked up. It's something I can't put into words, this happiness.”

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ★ **1,000 Freed Individuals**
Envision Freedom has reunited 1,000 people with their families by paying over \$8.8 million in immigration bonds since 2018.
- ★ **Largest Bond Fund in the Country**
We provide unique support to the Greater New York area.
- ★ **Impact on Case Outcomes**
By securing release on bond, we double the likelihood that individuals can remain in the U.S. compared to those who remain detained.
- ★ **Life-Saving Intervention**
Bond payments not only free individuals from unsafe and traumatic detention conditions but also grant access to vital resources.
- ★ **Policy Victories**
Envision Freedom's advocacy contributed to the passage of the Stop Immigration Bond Abuse Act and continues to push for transformative legislation like the Dignity Not Detention Act.
- ★ **Financial Challenges**
Rising bond amounts, systemic delays in bond refunds, and limited resources threaten our ability to meet the growing demand for assistance.
- ★ **Federal Accountability**
A class action lawsuit against ICE seeks to recover \$300 million in withheld bond refunds, aiming to deliver justice to impacted families and hold the government accountable.
- ★ **Threats from Anti-Immigrant Policies**
The incoming federal administration's anti-immigrant stance — and complicity from state and local elected officials — makes our fight against systemic injustices even more urgent and even more challenging.

INTRODUCTION

Every year, millions of people in the U.S. are incarcerated in prisons, jails, and immigration detention centers, forced to endure violence, trauma, and inhumane conditions. The U.S. criminal legal system, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), work together to target low-income, Black, brown, and immigrant communities — a collaboration that funnels immigrants into detention and deportation.

In response to the rise of ICE raids and aggressive immigration enforcement in 2018, Envision Freedom Fund began paying immigration bonds to maintain one of the few pathways to freedom for people detained by ICE. As the largest bond fund in the country and the only one in the Greater New York area, we've **invested over \$8.8 million to free 1,000 of our immigrant neighbors**. We anticipate that the need for immigration bond payments will increase in the coming years as federal, state, and local policies indicate that enforcement and detention will rapidly intensify in the New York area and across the country.

The bond amounts set by immigration courts are often exorbitant. In New York, they are especially high, with the median bond reaching \$10,000 — more than double the nationwide amount. For most detained immigrants and their families, these amounts are impossible to afford, leaving many to languish in detention or enter a predatory contract with a commercial bond company.

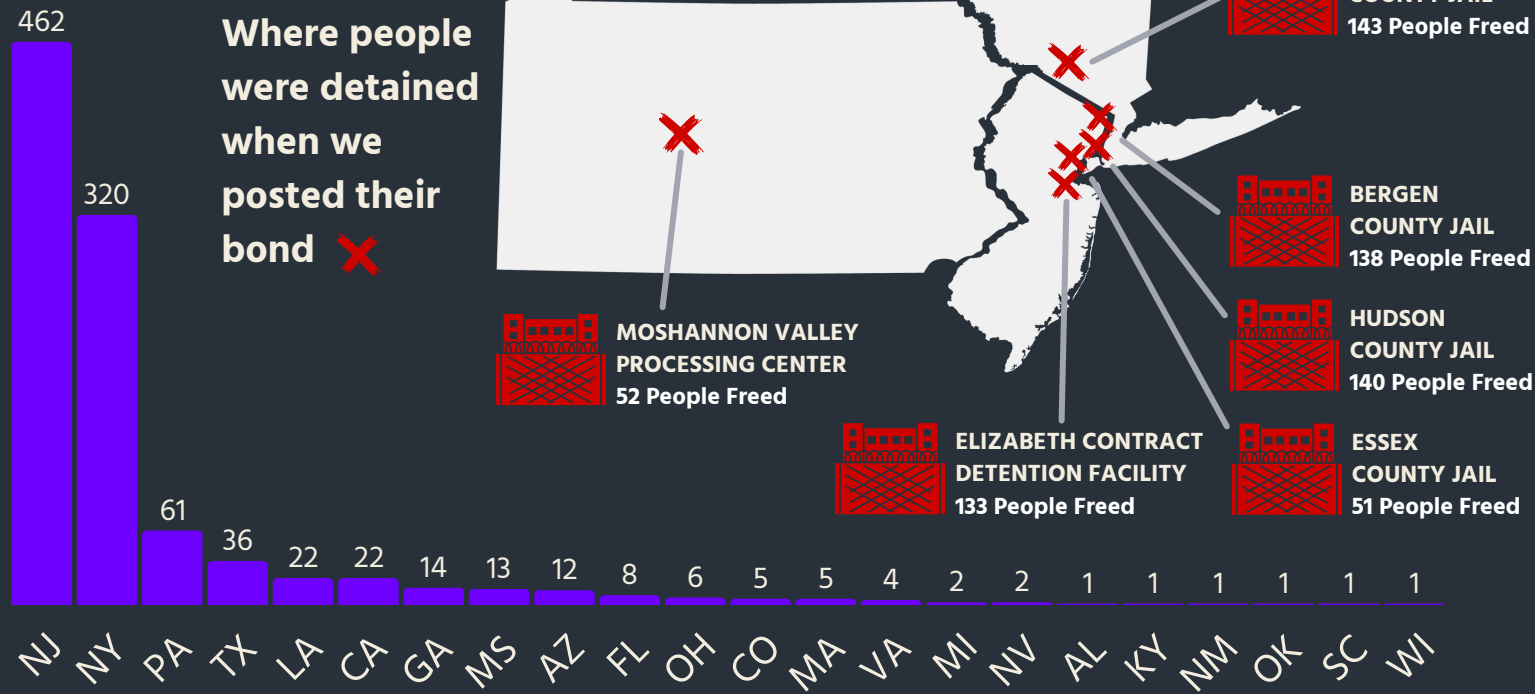
Freedom radically improves the lives of individuals, families, and communities. Not only are those who are released reunited with their loved ones, they are also better able to access resources that will help them heal and thrive while they continue to see their case through.

Ending the criminalization, detention, and deportation of immigrants is our ultimate goal. Until that day comes, immigration bond remains a critical lifeline for those seeking freedom. We are committed to providing stabilizing emergency support to the people we free while we build power within our community to advocate for radical systems change.

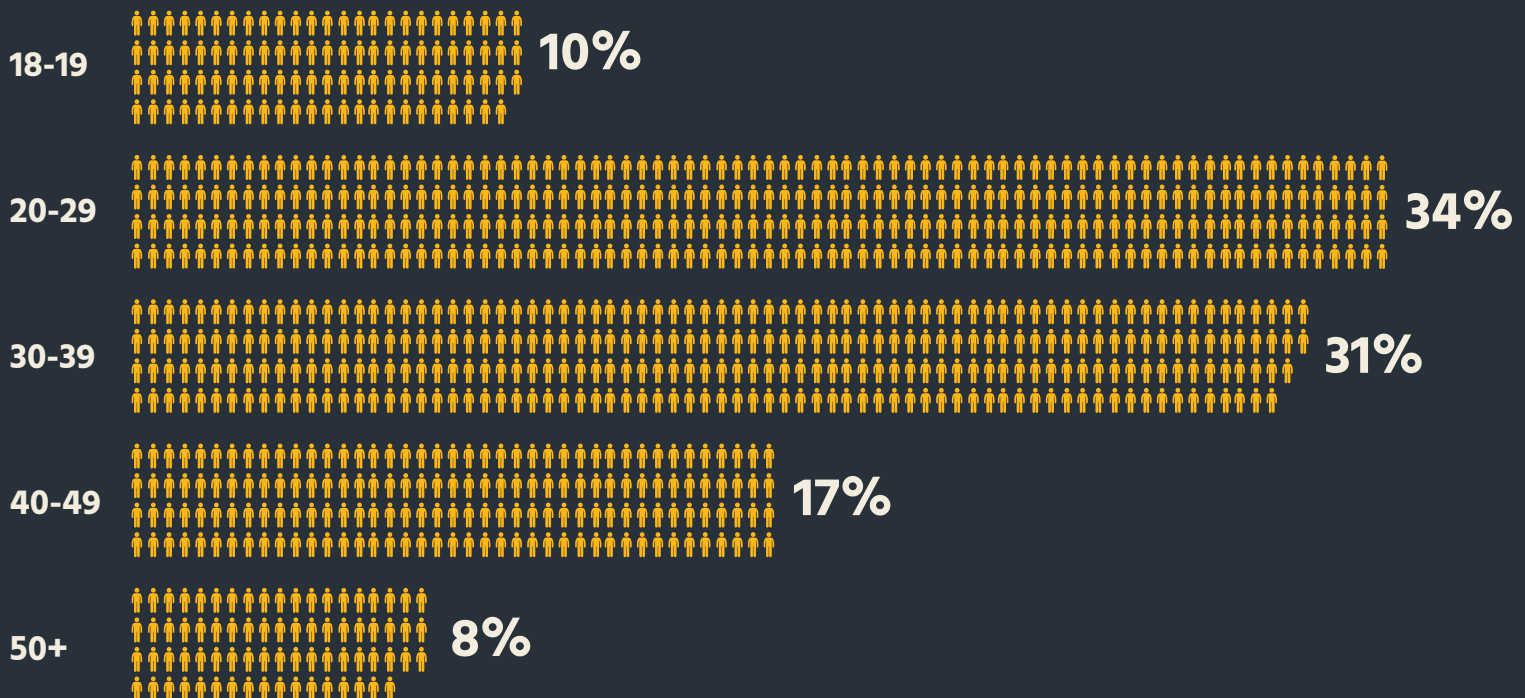


WHO WE SERVE

We pay bond for people across the country who have ties to New York. The majority of people we free are detained in facilities in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.



Ages of People We Freed



WHO WE SERVE

The people we pay bond for come from all over the world.

NORTH AMERICA – 135

Mexico – 133
Canada – 2

CARIBBEAN – 130

Cuba – 38
Dominican Republic – 30
Jamaica – 30
Haiti – 17
Trinidad and Tobago – 8
Antigua and Barbuda – 2
Dominica – 2
Bahamas – 1
Grenada – 1
St. Lucia – 1

EUROPE – 7

Estonia – 1
Poland – 1
Romania – 1
Slovakia – 1
Spain – 1
Ukraine – 1
United Kingdom – 1

WEST AND CENTRAL ASIA – 24

Turkey – 8
Georgia – 5
Iraq – 2
Jordan – 2
Syria – 2
Uzbekistan – 2
Afghanistan – 1
Iran – 1
Kyrgyzstan – 1

NORTH ASIA – 9

Russia – 9

CENTRAL AMERICA – 372

Honduras – 137
Guatemala – 115
El Salvador – 68
Nicaragua – 47
Costa Rica – 3
Belize – 1
Panama – 1

SOUTH AMERICA – 177

Colombia – 51
Venezuela – 49
Ecuador – 42
Peru – 18
Brazil – 10
Guyana – 4
Chile – 2
Bolivia – 1

NORTH AFRICA – 6

Algeria – 3
Egypt – 1
Morocco – 1
Tunisia – 1

WEST AFRICA – 93

Senegal – 19
Nigeria – 18
Ghana – 16
Burkina Faso – 8
Cote D'ivoire – 6
Guinea – 6
Sierra Leone – 5
Mali – 4
Liberia – 3
Togo – 3
Gambia – 2
Mauritania – 2
Niger – 1

CENTRAL AFRICA – 15

Cameroon – 6
Congo – 4
Democratic Republic Of The Congo – 3
Chad – 1
Equatorial Guinea – 1

SOUTH ASIA – 14

Bangladesh – 7
India – 3
Pakistan – 2
Sri Lanka – 2

EAST AFRICA – 7

Eritrea – 3
Kenya – 2
Rwanda – 2

SOUTHERN AFRICA – 3

Angola – 1
Namibia – 1
Zambia – 1

EAST ASIA – 2

China – 1
South Korea – 1

SOUTHEAST ASIA AND OCEANIA – 6

Philippines – 4
Papua New Guinea – 1
Thailand – 1

“Being locked up, without being able to see my family, only talking on the phone, and only being able to see the lawyer, because my family was far and couldn't travel to see me. All that was really hard.”



OUR IMPACT

PATHWAYS TO SAFETY & CARE

Envision Freedom has supported people with post-release services and referrals over 3,500 times since 2020, often addressing basic needs like food, housing, and employment. We also helped more than 300 people get access to healthcare.

FREEDOM FROM DANGEROUS CONDITIONS

Envision Freedom's bond payments to free people can literally be a life-saving intervention.

The county jails and federal detention centers where immigrants are incarcerated are rife with issues ranging from unbearably hot or cold temperatures, insufficient access to personal care and hygiene items, and barriers to mail, phone, and electronic communication. Detained immigrants also endure abuse from staff, and often experience life-threatening medical neglect.

Detention also significantly impacts mental health. Recently arrived immigrants suffer from higher levels of anxiety, depression, and PTSD once they are detained. One study found that nearly all detained immigrants experience clinically significant mental health symptoms. Mental health issues are constantly flagged in the requests people submit to us for bond support.

“Being locked up restricts everything. You forget all the good things that exist outside.”

Despite repeated scrutiny into their practices, ICE continues to punish people through the conditions they create in detention. Since we started posting bond in November 2018, 53 people have died in detention and 95% of these deaths were preventable. In the same time period, DHS has received an annual average of 630 allegations of medical and mental health neglect, 107 allegations of sexual assault or abuse, and 530 allegations condemning conditions in detention more broadly. At Orange County Jail in New York, for example, officers harass people based on race, religion, and immigration status, and use physical violence and solitary confinement in retaliation for filing complaints.

REUNITING FAMILIES & STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES

Detention separates families and destabilizes communities. The average detention facility is 62 miles away from the location of arrest by immigration authorities. Additionally, ICE can transfer people between facilities across the country at any point in time, often without adequate notice or consideration of the impact this will have on their access to family and legal support. ICE currently transfers hundreds of people between detention centers every year.

According to one study, more than half of people detained by ICE have a spouse and nearly three quarters have children in the US, but 47% report no visitation from their children while detained and 17% have no contact with their children at all while detained.

Envision Freedom works to reverse this cruel separation by reuniting people with their children, spouses, and other family members. Allowing families and loved ones to heal together helps to repair the social fabric of our communities.

ONE FAMILY'S JOURNEY TO FREEDOM & REUNIFICATION

Three brothers and their childhood friend arrived in the U.S. after a dangerous journey from Venezuela, including crossing the treacherous Darién Gap. They were met with separation and detention, each detained in different facilities across New York.

Isolated from their families for months and facing a combined \$20,500 in bond demands, Envision Freedom stepped in to pay their bonds. We helped them transition

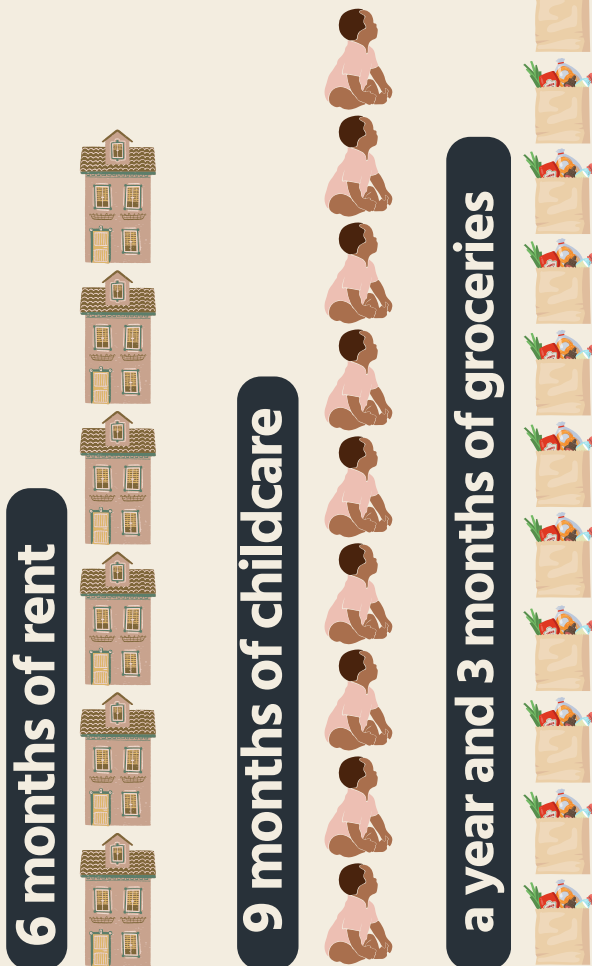
“My family represents freedom and the desire to keep going and find a better future. It's what motivates you on a daily basis.”



home and provided emergency funds and referrals to services — including connections to organizations supporting pregnant women, as one of their partners was expecting a child.

When they were all finally reunited in New York, one of the brothers shared, "We are very grateful to you for everything you did for us, thank you very much."

IN 2023, THE NATIONAL MEDIAN BOND AMOUNT WAS \$7,000. THAT MONEY COULD INSTEAD BE USED FOR:



REDUCING TIME SPENT IN DETENTION

The average time spent detained in New York facilities is longer than in the rest of the country, and criminal charges can further prolong a person's time in detention. Longer stays in detention make an individual more likely to be deported and contribute to more severe mental health symptoms.

People turning to us are in particularly precarious situations due to the length of their detention. When we post a person's bond in New York, they have already spent an average of 147 days in detention, compared to the national average of 70 days.

ALLEVIATING FINANCIAL BARRIERS TO FREEDOM

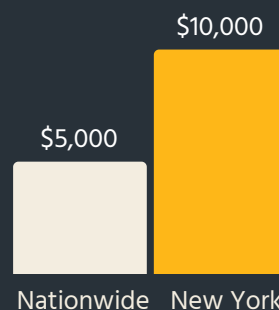
In the face of exorbitant bond amounts, our bond fund provides critical financial relief for detained immigrants and their families. Federal law requires that bond amounts are set at \$1,500 or more, but judges often set it many multiples higher. Nationwide, the median bond is \$5,000, though in recent years the figure has risen as high as \$8,000. In New York, amounts are higher than ever: Immigration judges in the state currently set the majority of bonds at \$10,000 or more, making them the highest in the country. And while federal law sets a minimum dollar amount, it puts no upper limits on judges' discretion. Judges can set bond amounts as high as they want, which has drastic consequences for immigrants with criminal records — we sometimes see requests for bonds at \$25,000 to \$30,000, and occasionally as high as \$50,000 to \$100,000.

By posting bond, Envision Freedom not only eliminates the financial burden but restores peoples' autonomy to support themselves and their families financially.

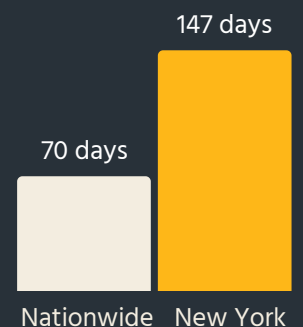
A family's income can fall by as much as 45% when an undocumented family member's earnings are lost. Many of the people we release are able to secure work authorization and stabilize their finances after the massive disruption that detention causes.

UNIQUE CHALLENGES OF ICE DETENTION IN NEW YORK

MEDIAN BOND AMOUNT SET BY JUDGES



DAYS SPENT IN DETENTION BEFORE RELEASE ON BOND



TRANSFORMING IMMIGRATION COURT OUTCOMES

Hundreds of people each year are forced to face a court decision from behind detention bars simply because they can't afford to post their bond. Nationwide data from EOIR confirms that cases determined in detention are more than twice as likely to result in deportation orders compared to cases for people released from detention. People with criminal charges are more than three times as likely to receive deportation orders if the person is detained rather than released. By posting bond, Envision Freedom protects people from deportation and dramatically increases their odds of success in their immigration proceedings.

In the past six years in New York and New Jersey, 82% of case decisions for people detained on bond were orders to leave the country (either removal orders, which allow the government to deport a person, or voluntary departure orders, which force a person to self-deport).



By posting bond, we cut those devastating odds by more than half – only 37% of case decisions for people we bonded out were orders to leave the country. Conversely, 63% of case decisions for people we bonded out resulted in permission to remain in the country (through dismissal or termination of removal proceedings, or relief such as asylum), compared to just 18% for people detained on bond at the time of decision.

POSTING BOND CUTS THE ODDS OF DEPORTATION ORDERS BY MORE THAN HALF

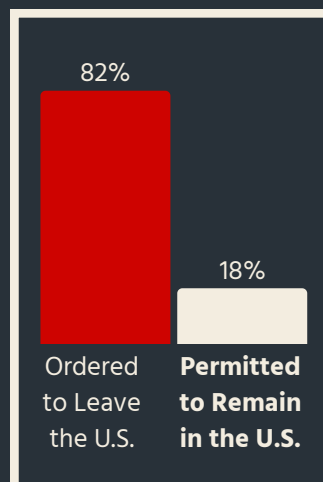
The chances that a judge orders someone to leave the U.S. (orders of removal or voluntary departure) drop from 82% to 37% when Envision Freedom Fund bonds someone out.

PEOPLE WE BOND OUT HAVE MORE THAN TRIPLE THE CHANCE OF PERMISSION TO REMAIN IN THE U.S.

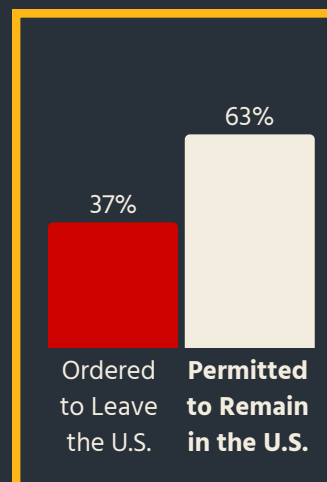
The likelihood of case dismissal, termination of proceedings, asylum, or other grants of relief rise from 18% to 63% when we bond someone out.

CASE DECISIONS OCT 2018–SEPT 2024

When Person Was Still
Detained on Bond in NY/NJ



When Person Was Freed
by Envision



“In the moment I got out, I felt huge happiness, because I got my freedom back.”

DISRUPTING THE IMMIGRATION SYSTEM

The impact of our bond program is profound, not only as a crucial turning point for each of the 1,000 individuals we've bonded out, but also as a disruption to the detention and deportation system in the region at large.

In the six years since we launched our bond program, the odds that someone would remain detained for their entire court proceedings on an unaffordable bond dropped by more than half in New York and New Jersey.

In local jails that contract with ICE, where conditions are particularly egregious, we are a primary line of defense – at Orange County Jail, for example, we are responsible for half of all releases on bonds set by immigration judges over the past four years.

ADVANCING LONG-TERM CHANGE

Envision Freedom is committed to not only addressing the immediate harms of immigration detention but also advocating for systemic changes to dismantle the structures that perpetuate injustice. Through legislative advocacy, coalition-building, and legal action, we are pushing for transformative change in immigration policy and practice.

IMPLEMENTING THE STOP IMMIGRATION BOND ABUSE ACT (SIMBAA)

The Stop Immigration Bond Abuse Act (SIMBAA), passed in New York in December 2022 after we led advocacy for the bill with African Communities Together, marking a significant step toward accountability for predatory bond practices. Envision Freedom is now focused on ensuring its effective implementation, including supporting community members filing claims for restitution from companies like Libre By Nexus.

SUPPORTING THE DIGNITY NOT DETENTION ACT (DND)

As active members of the Dignity Not Detention Coalition, we are steadfast advocates for the Dignity Not Detention Act (DND) in New York State. This critical legislation seeks to end immigration detention by:

- ★ Prohibiting government entities from entering into new immigration detention contracts.
- ★ Mandating the termination of existing contracts.

In collaboration with partners like the Center for Constitutional Rights, Bronx Defenders, and UnLocal, we work to educate New Yorkers and policymakers about the human and financial costs of immigration detention. Through public education campaigns, community engagement, and advocacy, we aim to build broad-based support for the Act.

“We had no choice but to raise a hunger strike in order to negotiate more dignified treatment.”

HOLDING ICE ACCOUNTABLE

Envision Freedom's two-year investigation, conducted in partnership with the Immigration Justice Clinic at Cardozo Law, uncovered evidence that ICE has illegally withheld over \$300 million in bond refunds from immigrant families. These funds, which should have been returned after case resolutions, represent a significant violation of immigrant rights.

In response, a class action lawsuit was filed in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York. If successful, this case could compel ICE to refund millions of dollars to immigrant families across the country, delivering justice for those affected and setting a precedent for accountability.



OBSTACLES TO FREEDOM

Our efforts to free as many individuals as possible are hindered by several significant challenges: mandatory detention, financial constraints, systemic inefficiency, and anti-immigrant attitudes.

FINANCIAL RESTRAINTS

As the only bond fund in New York, we prioritize freeing people with connections to New York, especially those who have had contact with the criminal legal system, as they are especially vulnerable. In New York alone, we anticipate \$600,000 per year in bond requests. The demand for our assistance paying bond has far outpaced our available resources and this challenge is compounded by rising bond amounts, particularly in upstate New York, where most bonds are set at \$10,000 or greater. With a growing waitlist, the need for financial resources is urgent — we cannot leave these individuals behind.

New York and New Jersey immigration courts, it takes an average of three years for a case to resolve, and ICE's administrative failings can further delay refunds by months or even years. These delays compound our financial constraints and significantly hamper our capacity to recycle funds into our bond program. We are currently awaiting bond refunds for more than 100 completed cases, with at least \$772,000 tied up in ICE's coffers despite their legal obligation to return those funds to us. These delays prevent us from freeing more individuals and reuniting more families, an issue that demands immediate legal and strategic action.

“We must take back our freedom and the freedom of those who will come after us. Each one of us is a drop, but together we form an ocean.”



MANDATORY DETENTION

Even if Envision Freedom were able to pay every bond in New York and across the country, the vast majority of people in ICE detention— 70% —are subjected to mandatory detention because of contact with the criminal legal system, and denied a hearing to determine eligibility to pay bond in exchange for their freedom. This is why it is critical for Envision Freedom to advocate forcefully for everyone to be released, regardless of whether they are granted bond.

SYSTEMIC INEFFICIENCIES

Another critical challenge is the inaccessibility of the bond payment system, especially for undocumented families (only U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents can post bond) . The process of navigating bond payment, particularly through ICE's online CeBonds system, has proven to be both complex and inefficient.—it is only available in English and can only be accessed from the U.S. Although the system was designed to expedite bond payments, we frequently encounter release delays, long waiting periods for bond approval, and repeated requests for additional documentation. These obstacles extend the time individuals spend in detention, which is especially troubling since each extra day spent inside has lasting impacts on their well-being.

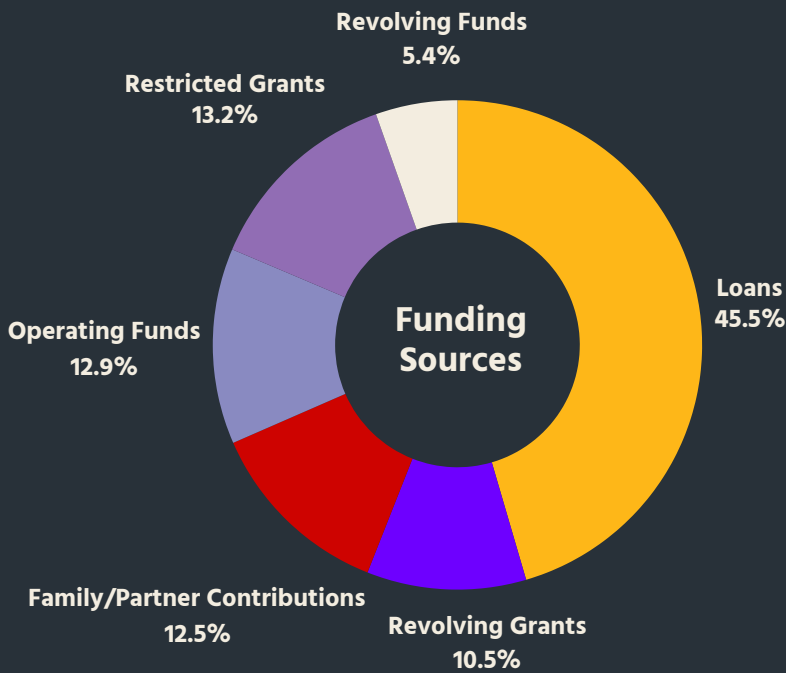
ANTI-IMMIGRANT ATTITUDES

Amidst all of these challenges, we have witnessed a disturbing rise in anti-immigrant rhetoric and fearmongering from our city, state and federal elected officials. While this is prevalent at the national level, racist tropes about migration and crime have permeated our local media and politics as well. This xenophobic language has created an unsafe and untenable environment for our newest neighbors, and has seeped into policy and government budget decisions. The vast resources of the government must be directed to policies and practices that protect human rights and allow newly arrived people to thrive and contribute to their families, the workforce, and our communities. It has never been more important to fight against the dehumanization of migrants and to fight for the rights, dignity, and freedom of all immigrants.

“Why can they treat immigrants in this inhumane way? Why can anyone be treated in this inhumane way?”



FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY & GROWTH



FUNDS RAISED AND DISTRIBUTED

From 2018-2024, we have made bond payments totaling \$8,742,250. By strategically leveraging community contributions, grants, and innovative funding mechanisms, we have built a model that prioritizes accessibility, accountability, and long-term sustainability.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

When individuals' cases are resolved, bond amounts are refunded — except for a small percent of forfeitures — and reinvested into freeing more individuals.

PENDING OUTCOME OF COURT PROCEEDINGS

- 657 BONDS (65.7%)
- \$5,757,500

BOND REFUNDED

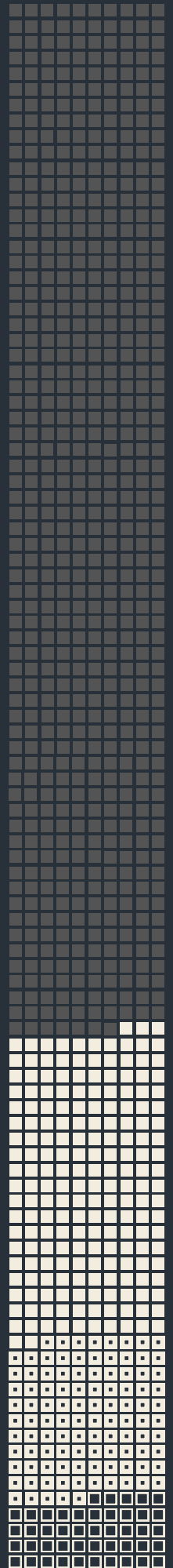
- 195 BONDS (19.5%)
- \$1,779,500

LEGALLY ENTITLED TO A REFUND DESPITE INACTION FROM ICE

- 103 BONDS (10.3%)
- \$772,000

BOND FORFEITED

- 45 BONDS (4.5%)
- \$433,250



CONCLUSION

The past six years have demonstrated the transformative power of freedom — for individuals, families, and communities. Envision Freedom Fund ensures that immigrants detained by ICE have a pathway to safety, stability, and dignity.

The 1,000 individuals we have freed are a testament to the collective effort of our supporters, partners, and community members.

As the immigration detention system continues to harm countless lives, our work is far from over. The fight for systemic change demands sustained advocacy, financial investment, and unwavering commitment. By expanding our impact and leveraging community support, we aim to challenge the injustices of detention and move closer to a world where every individual is free to thrive.

Together, we will continue to fight for the rights and dignity of all immigrants, building a future where freedom is not just a possibility but a reality for all.

