



CLUE (Clergy & Laity United for Economic Justice) Santa Barbara

February 20, 2023

Dear Chair Williams and Members of the Board of Supervisors:

CLUE Santa Barbara and the League of Women Voters of Santa Barbara appreciate the opportunity to work with you and County Public Safety leaders to improve our criminal justice system. We share common goals of eliminating the root causes of harm to people unjustly impacted by this system, protecting public safety, and insuring effective and efficient use of County funds.

Today we are filing with you more than 350 signatures on a Petition we have circulated within the community. The Petition calls on you to safely reduce the number of people in jail, increase needed community services, continue and expand co-response teams, provide fair and early representation for all, and create equal and fair access to evidence. Since the origin of this Petition, several important issues regarding our criminal justice system have come to light. For this reason, we think it is important to present the signatures now along with three key requests.

Direct the South County Jail Remodel/Rebuild Team to plan for a reduced total jail population of 550 or fewer.

You have now received Consultant Judge Sherrill Ellsworth's updates regarding Michael Wilson's expert report on Jail Population Projections. Wilson projected a future total average jail population of around 800 persons and provided five options that would reduce that population by about 250 people. The County is already implementing several of these, with the current average jail population decreased to around 750 persons. Research suggests a pending grant to the Public Defender for an Early Representation pilot program would lead to further substantial jail reductions by providing holistic intervention quickly after arrest rather than the current brief interaction just a few minutes before arraignment.

In addition, a number of other initiatives will provide enhanced treatment facilities and programs in the community further reducing the number of jail beds needed.

Expanded County Co-Response teams will redirect people with mental health challenges to community placements rather than booking them by default into jail. The County's Master Plan for Calle Real includes expansion of the psychiatric health facility and additional outpatient mental health facilities. Behavioral Wellness is planning to develop an increased number of locked beds at the crisis stabilization center. Good Samaritan is restructuring its sobering centers in both North and South County to provide enhanced treatment for "familiar faces," people who otherwise end up in jail by default for drug or alcohol intoxication. The number of supportive housing units available for persons recently discharged from jail is increasing: DignityNOW is adding 300 new beds, and a new Santa Barbara Sanctuary Center that includes reentry beds will break ground soon. It is our understanding that Judge Ellsworth will update you in April on current efforts and future goals to reduce the jail population to house only those who need to be there.

With this progress, it is reasonable to project that the County will need no more than 550 total jail beds. Already, 376 newly certified beds exist in the North Branch Jail. We request that you direct the South County Jail Remodel/Rebuild Team to plan for a reduced total of 200 or fewer South County Jail replacement beds to meet projected County wide demand.

Direct the South County Jail Remodel/Rebuild Team to compare design options for that facility with expansion of the North Branch Jail.

To cost-effectively and efficiently pursue design options to replace jail beds, the County must decide where those beds are best located. We call on you to direct the County's CEO (along with General Services and contracted architects) to compare time and costs (including staffing and operating costs) for two options: remodel/reconstruction of the South Branch Jail vs. adding units at the North Branch Jail in Santa Maria.

We have heard from an increasing number of Public Safety Department leaders and community members who prefer locating the replacement beds at the North Branch site, where a high proportion of residents are directly supervised by custody deputies personally interacting and monitoring residents rather than viewing them remotely on screens.

Direct Staff to pursue preparation of a Live Data System which tracks the availability of community beds for persons in need of mental health and/or addiction treatment.

Public Safety leaders in Santa Barbara County agree that public safety is best served if numerous people who are currently incarcerated instead receive community based

mental health or addiction treatment. Currently there is no transparent live data system available to public safety personnel to track the daily availability of beds and services. An interactive data base could be updated daily and list both public and private facilities, bed capacity, necessary restrictions, and available beds. Such a live data system would be extremely valuable, not only prior to booking, but especially in the approximately 48-hour period between booking and arraignment.

Around 30 people are booked into the jail daily. A data tracking system would allow law enforcement officers, the intake assessment team at each jail, and other public safety personnel to locate placements other than jail for appropriate individuals. In addition, data tracking could help determine what mental health and addiction facilities and services need to be prioritized in each year's budget process.

Conclusion. Important steps forward for healing our County's criminal justice system would be to direct staff to reduce replacement beds in the South County Remodel /Redesign, compare benefits and costs of that remodel with adding beds in the NBJ, and create a transparent, live data tracking system. Let's work together to meet the urgent moral obligation to eliminate unnecessary human suffering in our jails while providing safer communities.

Sincerely,

Laurence J. Severance

Laurence J. Severance
CLUE-CJR Workgroup Co-Chair

Gail Osherenko

Gail Osherenko
LWVSB CJR Task Force Chair

Maureen Earls

Maureen Earls
CLUE-CJR Workgroup Co-Chair

Pam Flynt Tambo

Pam Flynt Tambo
LWVSB VP Social Policy & Program

cc:

CEO Mona Miyasato
Sheriff Bill Brown
District Attorney John Savrnoch
Probation Chief Tanja Heitman
Public Defender Tracy Macuga
Behavioral Wellness Director Toni Navarro
Judge (Ret.) Sherrill Ellsworth