



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

April 19, 2023

Budget Workshops: Departmental Budgets – Public Safety/Public Defender

Dear Chair Williams and Members of the Board of Supervisors:

CLUE Santa Barbara and the League of Women Voters of Santa Barbara appreciate working with you and the County Public Safety Department leaders to reform our current criminal justice process. We share common goals to protect public safety, eliminate root causes of harm to people unjustly impacted by the current system, and to discern the most effective and efficient use of County funds to address these goals.

As your Board prepares for the upcoming 2023-34 budget hearings, we ask that you keep in mind the need to continue to prioritize criminal justice reform efforts.

- Many of the people who are booked into County jail suffer principally from mental health or addiction issues. They are better and most cost-effectively served by evidence-based treatment and services in community-based facilities, not in the jail.
- In addition, approximately 80% of those in jail are pretrial, presumed innocent, disproportionately poor, unable to pay bail, and people of color. We need to continue to fund alternatives to reduce the number who are held in County pretrial jail placement.
- Reducing the number of overall County jail beds will provide significant cost savings which can then be used to strengthen our community wellness options.

We understand that your Board has limited funds that are currently available for allocation to County Departments. We support prioritizing the allocation of these funds to the Public Defender's Office pursuant to all their requests as this will address the above stated criminal justice reform efforts.

- Of particular importance is their request for funding of leadership and supervisory support for three (3) Professional Supervisor positions, which include two (2) Legal Office Supervisors and one (1) Racial Justice Act Attorney Supervisor.

- Providing such Supervisorial infrastructure is critical to allow the Public Defender's staff to meet their mandated obligations to effectively represent their clients.

Your allocation of funds to these requests at this time will help meet the priority goal of safely reducing the County jail population while investing in increased support for successful alternative community placement.

Sincerely,

Maureen Earls
Co-Chair
Clue Workgroup

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Vice President & Social Policy Chair
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