



County Executive
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Governmental Relations and
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Elisia De Bord

County of Sacramento

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February 29, 2024

The Honorable James Ramos, Chair
Assembly Budget Subcommittee #6
1021 O Street, Room 8310
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Retain Funding for the Public Defense Pilot Program

Dear Assembly Member Ramos:

On behalf of the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors, I respectfully urge the Legislature to retain the \$40 million enacted in the Governor's FY 2023-2024 budget for the third year of funding for the Public Defense Pilot Program (PDPP). The PDPP provided funding for three years to cover costs due to increased workloads in Public Defenders' Offices due to new legislative reforms, such as those that allowed certain incarcerated individuals to request resentencing. This program has been successful, and we seek your leadership to continue this work.

Sacramento County, like other counties across the state, saved the state millions of dollars in incarceration costs and remedied unjust sentences that have disparately impacted people of color through PDPP. The Sacramento County Public Defender's Office will still have the increased workload created by the legislation, even if the state does not continue to fund the program. The state funding from the program has saved the state incarceration costs because individuals who were previously unjustly serving life sentences were released. The cost of incarcerating a single person in state prison is \$132,000 per year. Since the inception of the program, the Sacramento County Public Defender's Office successfully resentenced and released 33 people from custody who would have otherwise remained in custody for life, thus saving the state tens of millions of dollars in incarceration costs.

This modest, short-term investment already yielded significant long-term savings for the state. Statewide, year two data from 13 of the 34 grant-funded public defense programs yielded approximately \$94 million to over \$781 million in cost savings based on data from only two of the four areas covered by the pilot program. These 13 programs helped 529 people obtain release or reduced sentences, saving a total of 6,267 years of incarceration time. People of color made up 85% of the people resentenced. Cutting the PDPP funding now will deprive the state of critical financial and social investments.

PDPP funding also resulted in critical public safety improvements in our community. Investing in robust public defense programs has helped keep our neighborhoods safe and healthy. The funds permitted indigent defense providers to hire social workers and expand their holistic defense teams, creating a continuum of care for indigent defendants with psychiatric and substance use

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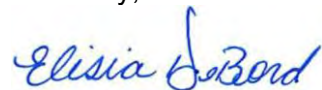
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disorders. The funds have allowed indigent defense teams to facilitate safe and successful reentry plans, enabling individuals to reintegrate into and meaningfully contribute to the community after incarceration. And the funding has also allowed indigent defense providers to reinvest in families, communities of color, immigrants, and low-income people. Without the third year of funding, these public safety gains will be stunted, as indigent defense providers will not have the resources to provide these services.

While states are responsible to ensure the effective provision of indigent defense, California delegated most of that responsibility to the counties that struggle with budget cuts. Notably, the PDPP is the only major statewide funding specifically allocated to the counties for the provision of indigent defense; nearly all other funding for indigent defense comes from the counties or a minimal amount from outside grants. The final \$40 million installment for the PDPP is a modest investment to ensure implementation of the reforms prioritized and passed by the Legislature.

For these reasons, Sacramento urges your support to continue the full PDPP funding as planned. Please feel free to contact me at (916) 874-4627 or deborde@saccounty.gov.

Sincerely,



Elisia De Bord

Governmental Relations and Legislative Officer

cc: Speaker Robert Rivas
Assembly Member Jesse Gabriel, Chair, Assembly Committee on Budget
Members and Committee Staff, Assembly Budget Subcommittee #6
Sacramento County Delegation
Chair and Members, Board of Supervisors
Audrey Ratajczak, Cruz Strategies
California Public Defender's Association