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April 9, 2021

Dear Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors,

The Fund for Santa Barbara strongly supports efforts to improve racial justice and prioritize humane treatment within our criminal justice and public safety system. We respectfully call on our Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors to reallocate our criminal justice budget to advance much needed transformational changes, including:

- Permanently reduce Sheriff's Department funding to support a long term average jail population of approximately 550.
- Reduce general funding for our Sheriff's Department by up to \$26.7 million and 165 FTEs to bring our Sheriff's Department budget in line with comparable counties.
- Reduce Sheriff's Department funding for traditional policing that doesn't reduce recidivism.
- Reallocate funds to community-based diversion and alternatives to jail, including more funds for the Behavioral Wellness Department to provide non-jail alternatives for mental health and addiction needs. Reallocate funds to support transition planning for jail residents returning to our community.
- Increase funding for the Public Defender Department to expand holistic advocacy and culturally competent staff to improve advocacy across the racial/ethnic spectrum.
- Reallocate funds to the County CEO to expand and centralize data collection and analytics.
- Require Departments to provide evidence-based data for programs to reduce recidivism.
- Offer a grant to the Sheriff's Department to expand jail internet and volunteer access -- including the award winning Freedom to Choose program that reduces recidivism.
- Reconsider plans for \$28M to refurbish the South County Jail. Reduce footprint to about 200 jail beds. Repurpose funds to build transitional housing to help stabilize eligible jail residents' re-entry into our community. Build a separate assessment center to screen and divert those who are appropriate for community-based alternatives.
- Provide seed funding to study a possible Civilian Oversight Commission to help ensure Sheriff Department transparency and accountability, and deter police misconduct.

Transformational change requires courage and vision. The Fund for Santa Barbara encourages you to move forward on these much needed reforms.

Sincerely,

Marcos Vargas, PhD
Executive Director
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