

Sheila de la Guerra **Public Comment**

**From:** Ivan Vega <ivan@futureleadersnow.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 31, 2025 4:38 PM  
**To:** sbcob  
**Subject:** PUBLIC COMMENT: Opposing Jail Expansion in SB County  
**Attachments:** SB County BOS Letter\_Stop Jail Expansion .pdf

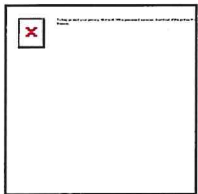


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Hello,

Attached is Future Leaders of America's public comment for Department Item #4: HEARING - Consider recommendations regarding an update on current renovations at the Main Jail and potential expansion of the Northern Branch Jail (NBJ).

Best,



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March 31, 2025

Dear Board of Supervisors,

On behalf of Future Leaders of America, we strongly oppose the proposed jail expansion in Santa Maria. Investing millions in additional incarceration infrastructure is a misguided approach to public safety. Instead, we urge community leaders to prioritize proactive solutions that uplift communities, reduce crime, and create long-term positive outcomes—particularly through increased funding for youth programs and prevention initiatives.

Future Leaders of America works to develop youth resiliency and leadership to create systemic change. Investing in community-based programs aligns with this mission and addresses the root causes of crime by fostering long-term safety and success. Research from the CDC underscores that strengthening economic security, expanding education, and promoting positive youth development are proven strategies for violence prevention ([CDC, 2024](#)). The proposed expansion, estimated to cost at least \$100 million, diverts critical resources from more effective alternatives. Consider the following:

- **Many individuals do not need to be jailed to protect public safety.** Currently, 17.5% of jail residents face misdemeanor charges, 60% are receiving mental health treatment, and 66.5% have not been convicted or sentenced.
- **Population and crime projections do not justify expansion.** The current jail population is near capacity, but sustainable alternatives could reduce it by 200 people, eliminating the need for additional beds.
- **Jail is an inhumane and ineffective solution for non-violent offenses.** Expanding incarceration contradicts efforts to reduce jail populations and fails to address rehabilitation needs.
- **Overbuilding jails is fiscally irresponsible.** A 33% expansion would impose significant long-term operational costs, including staffing and maintenance.
- **Community-based alternatives are more effective.** Programs focused on mental health, probation expansion, and treatment services reduce recidivism and improve public safety without excessive incarceration.

We urge you to reject this expansion and prioritize funding for initiatives that foster youth development and community well-being. By investing in prevention rather than incarceration, we can build a safer, more just Santa Barbara County.

Sincerely,

Future Leaders of America