



# Public Comment

## CLUE Santa Barbara

### Clergy & Laity United for Economic Justice

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Licensed Clinical Psychologist

Santa Barbara County Supervisors:

Re: SB Renovation and Construction Jail Project  
May 12, 2023

Dear Santa Barbara County Supervisors:

CLUE-Santa Barbara supports option 1 from the CEO Board report. CLUE's evidence and research shows nonviolent persons accused of minor offenses do not need to be jailed to protect public safety. As a faith based organization, we support funding for "Option 1" as the most humane and financially viable.

We endorse and ask that you vote for "Option 1", to:

- Add one housing pod to the North County Jail (not to exceed 256 new beds);
- Retain/remodel 128 beds in the South County jail's Inmate Reception Center
- Develop strategies and funding for jail population management, including diversion and other community-based alternatives.

344 certified beds are already available in the North County jail, and the new pod would add 256 more beds. There will also be 128 intake beds in the south county jail resulting in 728 beds total. Option 1 will be sufficient for the projected jail population based on the additional reductions from early representation and the expert population projection of Michael Wilson.

CLUE SB supports option 1 for the following reasons:

- The ten year 2022 data released by the Sheriff's Department shows a downward trend in total crime statistics for Santa Barbara County, consistent with the Wilson demographic projections.
- We can reduce the jail population safely. About 70% of those currently in our County jails are neither tried, nor convicted; they are awaiting trial. 65% are accused of felonies, but not convicted felons.
- For many accused felons of non-violent crimes, charges will be reduced as misdemeanors with minimal jail time.
- An estimated 30% or more of those currently held in jail suffer mental health challenges. For non-violent low level offenders, community-based treatment is a better use of public funds.
- Early Representation and holistic advocacy by the Public Defender, will help reduce the number of people in jail who do not need to be there. Our District Attorneys' diversion programs will also help.
- Creating a larger jail is not sustainable since there is insufficient staff to meet current needs.

CLUE SB is a network of interfaith community leaders and members organizing to address the root causes of local economic injustices to those marginalized in Santa Barbara County

Psychotherapy & Mindfulness Meditation

Jerry Menchaca

Pastor, New Beginning Community Church

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- Our County can use funds more wisely than building and maintaining unnecessary jail capacity, forcing mandatory overtime. We can always create a plan for new beds as needed.

Option 1 is the only choice that safely and humanely meets the Murray requirements in a financially responsible way. We are at a critical crossroad to determine how public safety will be achieved in our community. All the evidence directs us to reduce rather than increase the number of jail beds, increase helpful community based alternatives rather than harmful jail placement, and develop strategies for preventative diversions rather than arrest.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurence Severance, Co-Chair Criminal Justice Workgroup



Maureen Earls, Co-Chair Criminal Justice Workgroup

