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Public Comment

From: Lazandria Richey <lan.chosenva.7@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, January 21, 2022 11:19 AM
To: sbcob
Subject: Board of Supervisors should immediately address new Jail COVID Outbreaks



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Dear Chair Nelson and Supervisors:

The CLUE Criminal Justice Workgroup has reviewed Aaron Fisher's letter to the Santa Barbara County's legal counsel. We support the following actions:

Avoid Catastrophic Staffing Crisis and COVID Transmission. Nearly one quarter of the 725 current jail residents have tested positive during the outbreak that began in late December. As of January 5th, there were 94 active resident cases and 32 active staff cases. Now custodial and health care staff report 45% health and mental health care vacancies and at times have been unable to provide COVID vaccines to anyone in custody, despite a backlog of requests from jail residents.

1. Reduce Jail Numbers Safely. The recent Jail population's rise from 580 to 725 results from tripling the number of those accused of misdemeanors. Unsentenced low level accused jail residents, and those near the end of serving lengthy sentences, should be screened for release. Sheriff Brown should be encouraged to follow the practice of other counties and use his discretion for early release; thus far he has failed to act.
2. House mental health patients and those with substance abuse issues in appropriate alternatives. A recent Santa Barbara Grand Jury Report found under use of current community mental health crisis beds.
3. Immediately enable County Probation to coordinate risk assessments to recommend discharge. Provide authority and funding now for County Probation to manage risk assessments and decisions related to discharge. Appoint Probation to implement assessments and release of jail residents deemed not to be a risk to public safety. Accelerate funding for a multi-disciplinary risk assessment team.
4. Encourage a Safe North County Branch Jail Opening. Lawyers for the jail residents recommend collaboration with their Jail Remedial Plan experts to provide safe staffing ratios and required safe transport practices for the north county move. Please endorse this recommendation to the Sheriff.

Sincerely,
 Lazandria Richey

Date: January 21, 2022