

Public Comment



April 16, 2026

Dear Supervisors,

This jail size decision is not just about beds—it's about who we are as a community and how we care for people.

You are choosing between a 1.0 jail—256 beds—and a 1.5 jail—384 beds. The data is clear: we do not need the extra 128 beds. It would cost \$191.7 million more overall and \$7 million more annually—forcing deeper cuts to critical programs.

Our current population is about 765—already near the 1.0 capacity of 752, and well below the 1.5 option of 876. And the numbers are moving in the right direction.

We have shared in our CLUE/LWV data on 5 safe jail population reductions:

1. Up to 35 people daily are waiting in jail for treatment. With 32 new mental health and 35 contracted substance use placements coming online, we can reduce the population to about 730.
2. Already funded expansion of early legal representation is projected to bring it down by 28, 14 north county and 14 south county, to about 700.
3. With 70% of people awaiting trial, increased Public Defender staffing, as evidenced from other counties, shows we can reduce delays and lower the population by 50–60 or more—to a jail total then of around 650 or less.
4. Even with a projected 10-year jail growth of 60, reductions keep us within the 1.0 jail capacity of 752.
5. And finally, our higher-than-average misdemeanor arrest rate, 1,000 per 100,000 population more than peer counties like Ventura, is a local policy choice—not a public safety necessity—a correctable driver of unnecessary jail use.

Your jail size decision has real consequences.

Saving \$7 million a year in cuts matters. We don't need the extra 128 beds. Please support a 1.0 jail. It is enough!

Thank you,
Maureen Earls