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To: County of Santa Barbara Board of Supervisors

RE: Criminal Justice and Racial Equity in Santa Barbara County

Date: July 14, 2020

The League of Women Voters of Santa Barbara appreciates the initiative of the Santa Barbara County Council in planning a follow-up discussion on “advancing racial equity in the criminal justice system.” The recognition of the possibilities for greater use of alternatives to incarceration is timely and welcome.

The League of Women Voters of the United States has supported a program focus in recent years to address diversity, equity, and inclusion in our work throughout the country. This work is both urgent and timely and connects to the criminal justice issues raised both locally and nationally. The League of Women Voters of California recently adopted a position to address concerns regarding criminal justice reform. The California position briefly states that we support the following:

- A criminal justice system that is just, effective, equitable, transparent, and that fosters public trust at all stages, including policing practices, pre-trial procedures, sentencing, incarceration, and re-entry;
- The elimination of systemic bias, including the disproportionate policing and incarceration of marginalized communities;
- Policing practices that promote safety for both law enforcement officers and the communities they serve;
- Collaboration between government and community throughout every stage of the criminal justice system;
- A focus on humane treatment and rehabilitation with the goal of promoting the successful reentry into communities of those who have been incarcerated; and
- Reliance on evidence-based research in decision-making about law-enforcement programs and policies (including scheduled, periodic audits of program and policy effectiveness).

We look forward to following the progress of the Santa Barbara County Council and our County Jail. We recognize that in addition to incarceration and policing there are other issues in our society and our communities that require our attention in assuring that our communities address current and longstanding concerns regarding racism. As we move forward, we believe that we must engage all individuals, households, communities, and policy makers to create a more perfect democracy.

Sincerely,

Vijaya

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