

From: [Eder Gaona Macedo](#)
To: [sbcob](#)
Cc: [Gail Osherenko](#)
Subject: Public Comment: Jail Expansion
Date: Friday, March 28, 2025 11:47:43 AM
Attachments: [BOS Letter.pdf](#)

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I'm also adding a video to be presented at the meeting: [NoMoreJails](#)

Best,

Eder

Eder Gaona-Macedo, MPA
Executive Director
Fund for Santa Barbara



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March 28, 2025

Dear Board of Supervisors,

On behalf of The FUND for Santa Barbara, we are writing to express our strong opposition to building additional jail capacity in Santa Maria. Building additional incarceration infrastructure is a misguided approach to addressing public safety challenges. Instead, we urge our community leaders to invest in proactive and effective alternatives that uplift communities, reduce crime, and create long-term positive outcomes — particularly through increased funding for youth programs and prevention initiatives.

The FUND for Santa Barbara's mission is to **advance progressive change by strengthening movements for Economic, Environmental, Political, Racial, and Social Justice**. Investing in youth and community programs directly aligns with this mission by addressing the root causes of inequity and creating opportunities for long-term safety and success.

The proposed additional building in Santa Maria is estimated to cost **at least \$100 million** — funding that could be better used to support community-based programs that have been proven to reduce long-term crime. Research from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) underscores that investing in youth programs is one of the most effective strategies for reducing crime over time. The CDC's *Community Violence Prevention Resource for Action* identifies key approaches such as strengthening economic security, improving education, creating protective environments, and promoting positive youth development as evidence-based methods to reduce violence ([CDC, 2024](#)). Connecting young people with supportive adults and increasing access to community resources significantly reduces the risk of long-term involvement in violence and crime.

We urge you to consider the following key points regarding the proposed jail expansion:

1. **We are jailing people who don't need to be in jail to protect public safety:** A significant portion of the jail population consists of individuals who could be diverted from jail through alternative sentencing or treatment, such as those facing misdemeanor charges (17.5% of current jail residents), individuals on mental health treatment roles (60%), and those not convicted or sentenced (66.5%).
2. **Population and crime projections do not support an excessive jail expansion:** The current jail population is already near capacity, and projections show only modest population growth. Community-based alternatives could sustainably reduce the jail population by 200 people, making additional beds unnecessary.

3. **Jail is the least humane way to address non-violent crime:** Expanding jail beds contradicts efforts to reduce incarceration rates and offers a less effective solution for rehabilitation, especially for individuals with mental health challenges.
4. **Over-building jails makes no fiscal sense:** Expanding the jail by more than 33% would result in unnecessary costs, both in terms of construction and ongoing operational expenses, particularly as staffing and maintenance would create a significant financial burden.
5. **Our community is building alternatives:** Investing in community-based alternatives to jail, such as treatment programs, probation expansion, and mental health services, will be far more effective at reducing recidivism and enhancing public safety without the need for excessive jail infrastructure.

We urge you to reject this proposal and instead prioritize funding for programs that support youth development and community safety. This approach reflects a commitment to justice, equity, and the well-being of all Santa Barbara County residents.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration. We remain available to discuss how The FUND for Santa Barbara can support these efforts to build a more just and equitable future for our community.

Sincerely,

The FUND for Santa Barbara