



May 4, 2021

Assemblymember Phil Ting
Chair, Budget Committee
State Capitol, Room 6026
Sacramento, CA 95814

Senator Nancy Skinner
Chair, Committee on Budget & Fiscal Review
State Capitol, Room 5019
Sacramento, CA 95814

Assemblymember. Cristina Garcia
Chair, Subcommittee on Public Safety
State Capitol, Room 6026
Sacramento, CA 95814

Senator Maria Elena Durazo
Chair, Subcommittee on Corrections, Public
Safety, Judiciary, Labor, & Transportation
State Capitol, Room 2032
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Budget Request for Reentry Housing Program Under AB 328 (Chiu)

Dear Chairs Ting, Skinner, Garcia, and Durazo,

Thank you for your continued leadership to reduce California's prison population and your commitment to reducing homelessness among our most vulnerable residents. While these commitments are commendable, we are confronted with the sobering truth that people impacted by incarceration in California are far more likely to fall into homelessness, and simply do not have the access to housing or supportive infrastructure necessary to re-enter communities

successfully. Formerly incarcerated people experiencing homelessness, including many among the 3,500 non-violent offenders the Governor recently ordered released to mitigate the spread of COVID in prisons, can only reduce their risk of recidivating to jail and prison, and truly lower the costs of our justice system, if offered evidence-based housing, housing-based services, and employment/workforce development services. We therefore urge the Legislature to invest ongoing funding of ***\$100 million per year, costs the Department of Finance has estimated the state will avoid from the expected prison closure, to create the Reentry Housing and Workforce Development Program.***

Assembly Bill 328 (Chiu) would redirect General Funds that would have otherwise been spent on prisons expected to close or shutdown, to pay for grants to counties, homeless Continuums of Care, and community-based nonprofits to fund housing, housing-based and reentry services, and workforce development for people experiencing homelessness with recent histories of prison incarceration. Unlike current programs, the Reentry Housing and Workforce Development Program will provide evidence-based approaches proven to reduce homelessness among formerly incarcerated people. The program would not end housing and services assistance at arbitrary timelines, and will be administered as a housing and services program through the Department of Housing and Community Development, rather than as a corrections program.

The costs for AB 328 are minimal compared to costs the state will avoid in recidivating formerly incarcerated people. Data show safe, stable housing is critical to reducing recidivism and containing prison costs:

- The Vera Institute of Justice found people discharged from prison or jail to homelessness were seven times more likely to violate parole during the first month after release than those discharged to housing.¹
- The Urban Institute, in publishing findings from an Ohio Department of Corrections program, reported that participants who received supportive housing were 61% less likely to be reincarcerated and 40% less likely to be rearrested than people who were homeless in their first year after discharge.²
- Another study found that people with criminal records experiencing homelessness are rearrested at double the rate of their counterparts who secured housing.³

Based on the Governor's proposed January 2021 budget, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) will spend \$13,256,808,000 in state dollars on prison incarceration. or \$141,500 per year to incarcerate one person in prison.⁴ Per person spending will

¹ Marta Nelson, Perry Dees, Charlotte Allen, *The First Month Out: Post-Incarceration Experiences in New York City*, (1999) Vera Institute of Justice; at https://shnny.org/uploads/The_First_Months_Out.pdf.

²Jocelyn Fontaine, Urban Institute. *The Role of Supportive Housing in Successful Reentry Outcomes for Disabled Prisoners*. Cityscape: A Journal of Policy Development and Research. Vol. 15, No. 3. 2013. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy Development and Research.

³ Richard, R. Peterson, Ph.D., *Re-Arrests of Homeless Defendants in New York City*, N.Y. City Criminal Justice Agency Research Brief, No. 39 (2016).

⁴ <http://www.ebudget.ca.gov/budget/2021-22/#/Agency/5210>; <http://www.ebudget.ca.gov/2021-22/pdf/GovernorsBudget/5210.pdf>.

continue to increase, as CDCR predicts the adult population will continue to decrease by 7.3% or by 9,110 incarcerated individuals by 2024.⁵

However, providing stable housing with workforce development, as proposed by AB 328 will invest a fraction of the costs, and will yield far better outcomes. With an investment of \$100 million in ongoing General Fund dollars, the state could serve about 3,500 formerly incarcerated people per year, at a cost of about \$25,000 per person, per year, for those who need supportive housing—long-term affordable housing with intensive services—and workforce development services that provide a pathway into livable wage jobs. Given CDCR has previously estimated that one-third to one-half of the 56,000 people on parole are experiencing homelessness, \$100 million is a small step toward meeting the ongoing need for housing and workforce development services among formerly incarcerated people experiencing homelessness and economic instability. While we are seeking ongoing funding based on the estimated costs avoided from prison closures, the Legislature may also invest General Fund dollars from the surplus to test a five-year pilot.

Prison closures, early releases, and the COVID-19 public health crisis' impact on currently and formerly incarcerated people experiencing homelessness, and recent data linking inequities of justice policies to inequities of homelessness, all call for bold action to stem homelessness and un- and under-employment among formerly incarcerated people. Given the Legislature's commitment to improve our prison system and solve homelessness, we urge your action to pass this critical program. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Tina Rosales
Policy Advocate
Western Center on Law and Poverty

Ken Oliver
Director of Business Development
CROP Organization (Creating Restorative Opportunities and Programs)

Sharon Rapport
Director, California State Policy
Corporation for Supportive Housing

Christopher Martin
Policy Director
Housing California

⁵Due to the continuing impact of Proposition 57. SB 136, AB 965, and other policy changes, the population of incarcerated people will decrease ranging from 1% to 1.0%, with a net decrease of 7.3% by June 30, 2024. See Table 1, pg. 2; Figure 1, pg. 4. file:///C:/Users/TinaRosales/Downloads/Spring-2020-Population-Projections-.pdf.

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