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City and County of San Francisco Juvenile Probation Commission

William Siffermann
Chief Juvenile Probation Officer

March 9, 2011

The Honorable Edwin M. Lee
City Hall, Room 200
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Mayor Lee:

On March 9, 2011, by unanimous vote, the members of the Juvenile Probation Commission approved this letter, and authorized me to forward it immediately to your attention. As we have in the past, the Juvenile Probation Commission would like to continue to express its deepest concern regarding further budget reductions from the Juvenile Probation Department (Department).

We fully understand the ongoing dire economic condition of our City including the budgetary shortfall, and we support your efforts to have the City operate within its means. We know that our City's current fiscal situation demands that difficult decisions be made by all departments, and we truly appreciate the economic challenges and fiscal realities your office faces given the City's ever-increasing expenses while trying to accommodate shrinking State and Federal revenue. As we work together to meet the budget targets imposed on the Department, we must remain true to our highest priority: serving the youth of San Francisco. The Juvenile Probation Department is charged with helping the City's most vulnerable youth – those who have lost their way, and look to the Department and its dedicated staff to build their confidence and faith in themselves, complete their education, obtain job skills and make other significant changes necessary to create a better future outside the criminal justice system. If the Department reduces its budget by the assigned Budget Year Target of \$2.4 million, the impact would directly affect the Department's ability to provide its core services – custodial care, investigation and assessment, community supervision, effective placements, detention alternatives and gender-specific programming.

The Juvenile Probation Department has been given a 10% budget reduction target for the coming fiscal year, which represents \$2.4 million, and an overall possible reduction target of 20%, which representing \$4.8 million. However, the Department is already in crisis mode financially, having continually reduced its budget over successive years, with a \$1.6 million decrease in the last fiscal year alone. For fiscal year 2011-2012, the Commission has approved the Department's recommended budget plan submission to your office. We note that any further cuts in the Department's budget will result in undesirable consequences: the layoff or time reduction of critical Department employees and a decrease in the Department's ability to serve our youth and the public. Moreover, further cuts will jeopardize our long-term plans and the strategic vision of the Department to improve outcomes for youth and public safety services. This is the opposite direction from our city's current trajectory: through hard work San Francisco is increasingly recognized – at the local and national levels – as having best-in-class training, programs, and policies. We cannot reverse course now.

The Commission strongly urges you to accept the Department's proposed budget, and allow the Department to maintain essential core services to our City's youth and families. We cannot simply abandon these young men and women to an uncertain future lacking in support and necessary services. Creative solutions such as those proposed by the Department's budget staff must be supported. We appreciate your consideration of this letter, and look forward to working closely with your office as we wrestle with the City's ongoing fiscal challenges.

Sincerely,

Julian Chang, President
Juvenile Probation Commission

cc: Chief William Siffermann
Nicole Wheaton