

Rebecca Woodson, President
Katharine Albright, Vice President
Dirk Beijen, Commissioner
Julian Chang, Commissioner
Ellouise Patton, Commissioner
Sarah Ching Ting Wan, Commissioner



City and County of San Francisco
Juvenile Probation Commission

William Siffermann
Chief Juvenile Probation Officer

February 22, 2010

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
City Hall, Room 200
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Mayor Newsom:

On February 17, 2010, by unanimous vote, the members of the Juvenile Probation Commission approved this letter, and authorized me to forward it immediately to your attention.

The Juvenile Probation Commission would like to collectively express its deepest concern regarding further budget reductions from the Juvenile Probation Department ("Department"). As we wrote to you last year, we understand that the dire economic condition of our City, State, and Country is one where hard decisions must be made by all; we are not immune to it. We truly appreciate the difficulty of your fiscal decisions, and the burden of having to balance the many competing needs of our community with fewer resources. Nevertheless, serving the youth of San Francisco is our highest priority, and we believe that if the Department were to reduce its budget by 30%, the impacts would dramatically impinge on the Department's ability to provide its core services – probation, detention, rehabilitation and ultimately positive outcomes for our youth.

As you know, the Juvenile Probation Department has been given a 20% budget reduction target for the coming fiscal year, which represents \$5.1 million, and an overall reduction target of 30%, which representing \$7.6 million. As we expressed to you last year, the Department is already operating on a "bare bones" budget having reduced its budget over many, successive years with a \$1.45 million decrease in last year alone. While the Commission has approved the Department's recommended budget reduction plan for fiscal year 2010-2011 – totaling \$1.6 million and resulting in the layoff of 20 employees in probation services, food services, and administration – the Commission writes to express deep concern at this unprecedented loss to the Department. These cuts would significantly decrease the Department's operational ability to serve the public and ultimately result in reduced outcomes for youth. The Department would be able to meet its legally mandated duties. However, the Department would be unable to carry forward on current, innovative approaches to community partnering and violence prevention. These cuts further short-circuit long-term plans and the strategic vision of the Department to improve outcomes for youth and public safety services.

We, therefore, strongly urge you to reject the Department's proposed cuts and maintain essential core services to our City's youth and families. The Juvenile Probation Department is charged with helping youth who need us most – many of whom have lost their way, and in many cases their hope. These youth need to build confidence and faith in themselves to make a fresh start towards a better future. We cannot simply abandon these young men and women to an uncertain future lacking in support and necessary services. Creative solutions must be found. We appreciate your careful consideration of this letter and look forward to working closely with your office as we confront these challenging times.

Sincerely,


Rebecca L. Woodson, President
Juvenile Probation Commission

cc: Chief William Siffermann; Matthew Goudeau