



CALIFORNIA STATE ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

**CALIFORNIA DISTRICT ATTORNEYS
ASSOCIATION**

**CHIEF PROBATION OFFICERS OF
CALIFORNIA**

March 20, 2012

The Honorable Gil Cedillo
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 5
State Capitol, Room 6026
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Budget Item No. 5225 – Proposed Closure of Division of Juvenile Justice

Dear Assembly Member Cedillo:

On behalf of the California State Association of Counties (CSAC), the California District Attorneys Association (CDAА), and the Chief Probation Officers of California (CPOC), we write to express our opposition to the 2012-13 budget proposal that would cease intake of youthful offenders into the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) beginning January 1, 2013. This issue is scheduled to come before the Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 5 on March 28, 2012.

Previously legislated transfers of youthful offender population to counties mean that placements in a DJJ facility are now limited to only the most serious and violent youth. This population, in most cases, is decidedly unfit for local placement options, as these youth possess complex criminal profiles often accompanied by significant mental health, behavioral, and treatment needs. Many counties are not equipped to adequately or appropriately address the needs of this population. It has been and remains our collective view that the state has an important and necessary role in the juvenile justice continuum, a role that has been narrowed in recent years to housing and rehabilitation of the most serious youthful offenders. Regrettably, given either the severity of the crime or the extent of a youth's treatment needs, DJJ often is the only practical, and sometimes last available, placement option for this population.

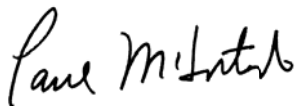
If future DJJ commitments were eliminated, several consequences to the system would likely follow. First, the state would likely see an increase in adult court proceedings for youthful offenders, reflecting the fact that a local option either may not exist to manage this population or may be viewed as inappropriate given the nature of the crime. Secondly, if counties have to absorb this population at the local level, we are extremely concerned that the mixing of the most serious and violent juvenile offenders with the youth now in our custody and care would greatly compromise rehabilitative efforts of the current local population. Requiring probation departments to assume responsibility for a population that has typically failed out of every available local option would hamper existing intervention and rehabilitative efforts – a result that would translate into reduced effectiveness and diminished outcomes for the 98% of the juvenile offender population counties now manage. We do not view any of these likely scenarios as a good outcome for the youth, our communities, or the system.

The other undesirable impact of the proposed DJJ closure relates to counties' present efforts to implement the adult criminal justice realignment. At a time when local criminal justice systems are but a few months into implementing a seismic policy shift in the management of offenders at the local level, the notion that counties would be asked to manage the state's most serious youthful offenders threatens the likelihood of our success. A shift in focus to take on this sizeable and challenging new responsibility would threaten counties' ability to produce improved outcomes for either adult or youthful offenders.

It is for these reasons that our associations must oppose the proposed closure of DJJ. While we appreciate the severity of the fiscal problems facing the state and the extremely limited options available, we feel it is incumbent upon our associations to point out the untenable choices counties would face if the DJJ were to be eliminated as a dispositional option for the most serious juvenile offenders.

Counties – including the membership of our individual associations – remain committed to a continued discussion with the Legislature and Administration in exploring alternative solutions. We appreciate your consideration of the county perspective on this important policy issue.

Respectfully,



Paul McIntosh
CSAC Executive Director



W. Scott Thorpe
CDAA Chief Executive Officer



Karen Pank
CPOC Executive Director

cc: The Honorable Bob Blumenfield, Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
The Honorable Jim Nielsen, Vice-Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
Members and Consultants, Assembly Budget Committee