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57th Assembly District



AB 912 – SAFE (Strategic Anti-Violence Funding Efforts) Act

SUMMARY

The SAFE Act reinvests cost savings from prison closures into programs that reduce violence, provide diversion opportunities, and deliver critical community supports including mental health, education, and vocational services.

BACKGROUND

On December 6, 2022, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) announced the closure and deactivation of two additional prisons. With the closure of these facilities, the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) estimates an annual cost savings of \$235.3 million. Reductions in the prison population are the direct result of the Legislature's advancement of sensible legislation and budget items to improve public safety, and advance justice and equity. Rather than returning to the General Fund, it is imperative these savings are kept within the Legislature's crime prevention budget and reinvested into effective strategies proven to further reduce crime and violence.

Studies have shown health-based approaches have been successful in curbing violence through applied, skill-based prevention programs. Addressing youth mental health and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) is crucial in mitigating long-term effects, such as substance abuse, mental illness, chronic health problems, and criminality. Existing programs have been successful in providing crucial resources and early intervention to youth.

For instance, skills-based group intervention has been proven successful in relieving PTSD symptoms, depression, and general anxiety among children exposed to trauma. Because evidenced-based programs for trauma-impacted youth have shown consistent success in deterring violence through early intervention, it is crucial that these programs are expanded with priority to the state's regions with the highest homicide and violent crime rates. Further, data

has shown the public health benefits of school-based health centers. Located on school sites, these centers increase preventive health services, reduce mental illness among youth, provide better outcomes for chronic conditions, and improve overall school performance.

First established in 2018, the Youth Reinvestment Grant (YRG) provides funds to local agencies and Native American tribes to implement culturally relevant, trauma-informed diversion programs for minors. Since then, nearly \$60 million has been committed to agencies and tribes throughout the state, proving to yield effective results. For instance, CARAS: Project Evolve's YRG-funded initiative saw a 67% reduction in youth arrests from 2019 to 2021, far exceeding the program's initial 30% reduction goal. With the previous appropriation to YRG ending on June 2023, the state must extend funding to reaffirm its prioritization of this successful grant program.

Further, evidence-based, focused deterrence programs that engage high-risk individuals susceptible to committing violence or reoffending have proven to reduce violence. For example, Oakland's Ceasefire strategy partners local government with community organizations to provide tailored services to support high-risk individuals in stepping away from violence. Within a five-year span, Oakland experienced a 43% reduction in homicides and a 50% reduction in non-fatal shootings.

Creating safe spaces during peak times of violence has also played a crucial role in prevention and diversion. For example, the Summer Night Lights, a component of the Gang Reduction & Youth Development (GRYD) Comprehensive Strategy in Los Angeles, provides extended programming, sports leagues, and spaces for recreation, employment opportunities, and access to local resources. As shown with the success of GRYD's Summer Night Lights, recreation and health-based opportunities are an essential part of reinvesting in communities impacted by violence.

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THIS BILL

AB 912, the SAFE Act, reallocates the \$235 million in annual savings from the proposed closure of two prisons in the 2023-24 state budget. The funds will go to:

1. Extend funding for the YRG;
2. Reduce gang violence and gang involvement through programs modeled after successful ones, such as Oakland Ceasefire;
3. Increase access to physical and mental health services for K-12 students through school-based health centers;
4. Expand evidence-based intervention programs for youth who are impacted by trauma; and,
5. Support parks and recreation opportunities, including summer youth leagues and extended programming.

SUPPORT

National Center for Youth Law (Co-Sponsor)

California School-Based Health Alliance (Co-Sponsor)

Adolescent Health Working Group

Alta Public Schools

California Alliance for Youth & Community Justice

California Alliance of Caregivers

California Alliance of Child and Family Services

California Calls

California Children's Trust

California Faculty Association

CaliforniaHealth+ Advocates

California Public Defenders Association

California School-Age Consortium

Californians for Safety and Justice

Californians United for a Responsible Budget

CARAS – Community Agency for Resources, Advocacy and Services

Children Now

City and County of San Francisco, Board of Supervisors

Community Clinic Association of Los Angeles County (CCALAC)

Community Works

Defy Ventures

Drug Policy Alliance

Ella Baker Center for Human Rights

Essential Access Health

Equality California

ExpandLA

Faith in the Valley

Freedom 4 Youth

Freedom Within Prison Project

Fresh Lifelines for Youth

Friends Committee on Legislation

Haywood Burns Institute

Indivisible CA: StateStrong

Insight Prison Project

James Morehouse Project

John Burton Advocates for Youth

KALW Public Media

Kids in Common

La Clínica de la Raza

La Defensa

Lake County Office of Education

Lincoln Families

Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools, Dr.

Debra Duardo

Los Angeles Unified School District

March For Our Lives

MILPA

National Association of Social Workers, CA Chapter

National Center for Lesbian Rights

National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform

Pacific Juvenile Defender Center

Partners Against Violence

Prosecutors Alliance of California

Racial and Ethnic Mental Health Disparities Coalition

(REMHDCO)

ReEvolution

Rising Communities

Sacred Purpose LLC

San Francisco Youth Commission

San Mateo Union High School District

Santa Cruz Barrios Unidos

Santa Cruz County Office of Education

Sharefest Community Development

Sigma Beta Xi, Inc.

Sister Warriors Freedom Coalition

Smart Justice California

Sow A Seed Community Foundation

Starting Over Inc.

Success Stories Program

Teens for Vaccines
The Los Angeles Trust for Children's Health
TheatreWorkers Project
To Help Everyone (T.H.E.) Health and Wellness
Centers
Transformative In-Prison Workgroup
Women's Foundation California
Young Women's Freedom Center
Youth Forward
Youth Mentoring Connection

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