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[SUBMIT VIA THE ADVOCATES PORTAL AT https://calegislation.lc.ca.gov/Advocates AND EMAIL A COPY TO jcalcagno@schoolhealthcenters.org AND Natalia.Garcia@asm.ca.gov BY May 18, 2023]

[Date]

The Honorable Chris Holden

Chair, Assembly Committee on Appropriations

1021 O Street, Suite 8220

Sacramento, California 95814

**Re: Support for AB 912 (Jones-Sawyer) – Strategic Anti-Violence Funding Efforts (SAFE) Act**

Dear Chair Holden,

On behalf of [Organization’s name], I am writing in support of Assembly Bill (AB) 912, the SAFE Act, by Assemblymember Jones-Sawyer. This comprehensive measure 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.

On December 6, 2022, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation announced the closure and exiting of contract for two additional prison facilities. With the closure of these facilities, the Legislative Analyst’s Office estimates a cost savings of $235.3 million annually. 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.

The SAFE Act calls for the reallocation of the $235 million in annual savings from the proposed closure of two prisons in the 2023-24 state budget. Those funds will go to the following programs:

1. $50 million annually to relocate the Youth Reinvestment Grant Program from the Board of State and Community Corrections to the Office of Youth and Community Restoration. Grants are available for local jurisdictions and California tribes for trauma-informed diversion programs for minors.
2. $35 million annually to the Department of Justice for the purpose of programs that reduce gang violence and gang involvement, modeled after successful programs like Ceasefire in Oakland that resulted in a 43% reduction in homicides and a 50% reduction in non-fatal shootings.
3. $50 million annually to the State Department of Public Health, in consultation with the State Department of Education, to provide operational grants to School-Based Health Centers and provide health and mental health services to children on school sites.
4. $50 million annually to the California Health and Human Services Agency to support a pilot program for Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS) in Alameda, Fresno, Merced, Tulane, Kern and Los Angeles. This program supports early trauma-informed interventions for school-aged children experiencing extreme traumatic events in support of their health, well-being and community stability.
5. $50 million annually to the Department of Parks and Recreation in support of grants to local governments and community-based organizations to create new parks and fund recreation and health-based opportunities during peak times of violence.

[Insert organization’s background and/or any specific stories or cases to emphasize the need for this bill]

For the reasons previously stated, [Name of organization] is pleased to support the SAFE Act (AB 912, Jones-Sawyer).

Sincerely,

[Signature

Name

Address

Contact Information]

cc: Honorable Members, Assembly Appropriations Committee

Assemblymember Reggie Jones-Sawyer, Assembly District 57