Overview

On January 9, Governor Jerry Brown’s released the 2014-15 budget proposal that reflected an increase in expected revenues by $6.3 billion and with a projected surplus of $5.6 billion by the end of the 2014-15 fiscal year. The positive revenue outlook for the state did not translate to any real investments to California’s tattered safety net. The Governor and this budget instead ignored the poverty crisis that Californians are facing, with more than 8.7 million people living in poverty in this state, 2 million of which are children.

The Governor instead chose to again prioritize prison spending by growing the corrections budget from $9.2 to $9.8 billion, pushing for a 2 year extension of the Court Order on prison overcrowding and spending millions of new dollars to expand the prison and jail system.

At a time when families have still not recovered, greater investments can and must be made to respond to the need of Californians that continue to struggle. We look to the Governor to join us in reducing prison spending and building a road out of poverty.

Recommendations

Reduce Prison Spending, Restore Health & Human Services and Reduce Poverty

- Restore Funding to anti-poverty programs devastated by previous cuts. CalWORKs, Medi-Cal, Child Care, In Home Supportive Services, SSI and more have suffered $15 billion in cuts since 2008. Investments in these programs will alleviate the highest poverty rate of any state in the country.

- Expand Access to Public Benefits for all Californians. Expand health and mental health services, affordable housing, and human services for all categories of California’s population,
specifically low income, immigrant, communities of color, and formerly incarcerated people.

- **Remove Barriers to Participation.** Eliminate barriers to access public benefits, public housing, and jobs for all Californians, including CalWORKs, CalFresh, and jobs programs.

**Cancel All Prison and Jail Expansion**

- **Cancel the $500 million additional jail construction dollars.** We need community-based resources to respond to prisoner realignment, not build bigger jails.
- **Continue with the closure of the Norco California Rehabilitation Center (CRC).** The ongoing cost to keep this dilapidated prison open is $160 million annually, not including repairs and maintenance.
- **Cancel the activation of new prison beds.** This includes the hundreds of proposed new beds at the DeWitt Nelson Correctional Annex, the Northern CA Reentry Facility, & newly constructed beds at the prison hospitals.
- **Prevent the Recidivism Reduction Fund (SB105) from being used to fund prison and jail expansion.** For example, $8.3 million is slated for design of the Northern CA Reentry Facility. We need this funding in community-based reentry programs.
- **Prevent any Out-of-State transfers.** The Governor’s budget proposed $315 million appropriated in SB 105 to contract additional bed space. Bring home the current 5,633 California prisoners in out of state facilities, and refuse to send the additional 6,292 people to contract facilities.
- **Cancel the previous $810 million to expand prison in-fill beds.** This funding only incentivizes the Governor to send more people to out-of-state prisons instead of developing durable solutions to reduce the number of people we lock up.

**Reduce the Prison and Jail Population**

- **Ensure that CDCR & Gov. Brown are held responsible for reaching the 137.5% population reduction benchmark,** by creating a sustainable plan to reduce the number of people we lock up.
- **Implement & Expand the Good-Time Credit.** The Governor’s budget prospectively enhances the credit level from 20-33.3%, for second strike prisoners with non-violent sentence. We propose making these credits retroactive and applying good time credits to a broader group of people in prison.
- **Implement & Expand the Elder Parole proposal** to address the rapidly aging prison population and reduce the need for high cost medical beds. Expand the proposal to people who have served 15 years of their sentence and are 50 years or older.
- **Implement & Expand the Medical Parole proposal** to eliminate the need for more high cost medical beds.
- **Implement mandatory split-sentencing at the county-level.** This would require that counties utilize split sentencing, which would dramatically reduce the jail population.
- **Ensure every person in prison has access to programming** and that everyone on parole gets services to help with their transition. Programming and services are proven to dramatically reduce recidivism. Demand that CDCR come up with a plan to guarantee access to programs for 100% of prisoners and parolees.