

ALTERNATIVE INVESTMENTS TO IMPRISONMENT

NO NEW JAILS!

Californian's health and safety will not be improved with jail expansion. California county jails are inherently violent, poorly run, and wastes of taxpayer money. The public funds that are now used to police, convict and incarcerate people should be going to provide housing, education, health care & employment. Safe and healthy communities depend on mental health services, youth centers, supportive and affordable housing, and real opportunities in their communities; not cages.

Californians want, deserve, and demand to live in a state that prioritizes the health, wellbeing, cultural and political life of *all* of California residents. Currently, many California residents are facing hard times. It is difficult for many people—particularly in communities of color—to find meaningful work, affordable housing, and access to good education and sustainable healthcare. Decision-makers with the power to change these conditions, however, are not focusing on our communities' needs. Instead, many political leaders are prioritizing spending more of our tax dollars on building more jails, hiring more police, and subsidizing more high-end condos and luxury apartments. We do not need more jails in California counties. We need the basic resources and opportunities that make our communities healthier and whole.

COMMUNITY-BASED SOLUTIONS AND ALTERNATIVES TO IMPRISONMENT

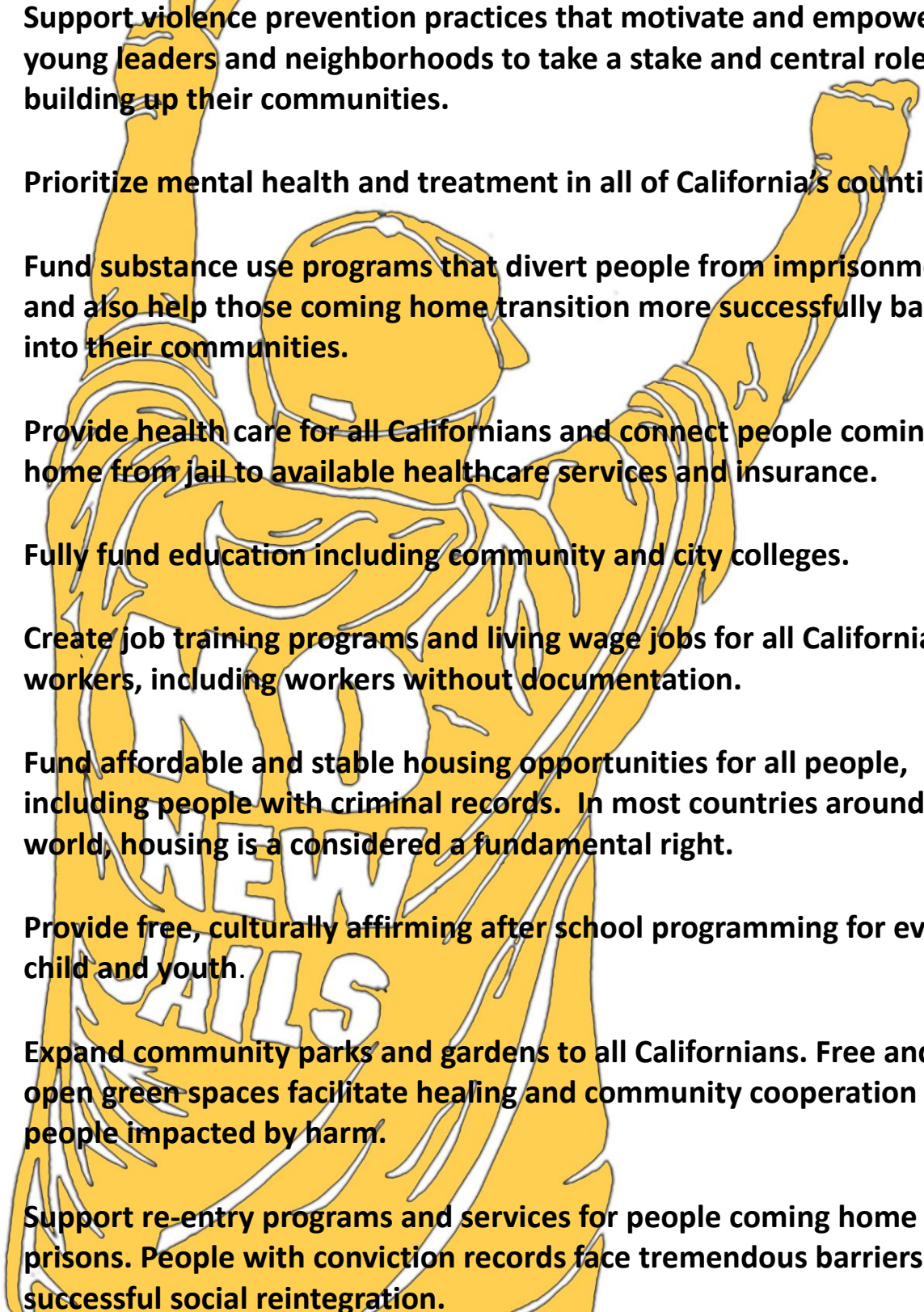
Academic and community-based research, repeatedly finds that community-created and community-focused solutions to harm and violence have exponentially better outcomes. Unlike jails, local solutions and community resources are much more likely to keep families intact, assist loved ones to overcome the hardships of addiction, reduce the likelihood of repeated harm, increase community stability. Communities prosper when they are healthy, stable, and people have the tools and resources necessary to build strong relationships.

The state of California has been federally ordered to reduce the number of people in its prison system due to human rights violations caused by crowding and prison conditions. Rather than meet its obligation to reduce the number of people locked up in the state, the state of California is now acting in bad faith with what politicians call "realignment." This practice does not reduce the number of people who are held behind bars in California, rather, it simply shifts people from state prisons into county jails. Jail use has been on a downward trend throughout the state for the past several years. Yet, because the state is now looking for loopholes around the federal mandate to release people from cages, counties are being enticed to increase their jail sizes. Instead of providing communities with the basic resources and supports that are known to dramatically reduce the number of offenses that lead to incarceration, millions of tax dollars are now being directed into building more jails throughout the state.

If we restored funding to pretrial diversion programs we could divert people from imprisonment in the first place. Funds would be better utilized for implementing community based programming Alameda County, for example, has done this through the department of public health *Innovations In Reentry* initiative. Available funds could also be used to expand and support the restorative and transformative justice practices that many community groups are already practicing as alternatives to incarceration. Such approaches to harm reduction have had very positive effects in many of the k-12 schools throughout the state that have implemented them. Prisons, jails and zero-tolerance punishments have failed time and again to restore people's lives, dignity and ability to meaningfully participate in society when people are entangled in the system. Building on and supporting the community work to reduce harm and sustain healthy communities that is already taking place throughout the state is a much better and more effective use of our resources and policies.

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Instead of building new jails, funds would be better used to:

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- Support violence prevention practices that motivate and empower young leaders and neighborhoods to take a stake and central role in building up their communities.
 - Prioritize mental health and treatment in all of California's counties.
 - Fund substance use programs that divert people from imprisonment and also help those coming home transition more successfully back into their communities.
 - Provide health care for all Californians and connect people coming home from jail to available healthcare services and insurance.
 - Fully fund education including community and city colleges.
 - Create job training programs and living wage jobs for all California workers, including workers without documentation.
 - Fund affordable and stable housing opportunities for all people, including people with criminal records. In most countries around the world, housing is a considered a fundamental right.
 - Provide free, culturally affirming after school programming for every child and youth.
 - Expand community parks and gardens to all Californians. Free and open green spaces facilitate healing and community cooperation for people impacted by harm.
 - Support re-entry programs and services for people coming home from prisons. People with conviction records face tremendous barriers to successful social reintegration.