

From: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
To: [Jesseka Rodriguez](#)
Subject: FW: Budget Input - Invest in Prevention
Date: Thursday, May 29, 2025 8:21:40 AM

From: Luisa Magarian [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, May 26, 2025 9:58 AM
To: Board Of Supervisors <boardofsupervisors@santacruzcountyca.gov>; Third District <Third.District@santacruzcountyca.gov>
Subject: Budget Input - Invest in Prevention

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Dear Supervisor Cummings and Board of Supervisors,

I am a resident of Santa Cruz and an auntie of two Bay View Elementary students, and I care deeply about the well-being of our community. As you make critical budget decisions, I urge you to remember: an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure—especially when it comes to public health and safety.

Please prioritize funding for programs that meet people's basic needs and prevent crises. Every dollar spent on housing, mental health care, and community services saves far more than we spend managing the consequences. Cutting support for programs like MHCAN, the Homeless Persons Health Project, and the Gemma Program will only lead to more costly outcomes—such as emergency room visits, avoidable arrests, and harm to our most vulnerable community members.

At a time when many people are losing health insurance and food assistance due to federal policies, Santa Cruz County can and should do better. Further cuts are not fiscally responsible and aren't what our community needs or deserves.

I understand the budget is tight. We must look carefully at where

cuts can do the least harm and where spending could be reallocated more effectively. Our systems of incarceration and law enforcement take up a disproportionate share of the general fund and are not bearing an equitable share of proposed cuts.

For example, we're spending over \$15,000/month/person in our jail, and the majority are held pre-trial for misdemeanors simply because they can't afford bail. Juvenile Hall costs over \$9M/year to house an average of just 9 youth. Rountree is almost empty and could be closed, which would reduce General Fund contributions to corrections by 10%. These are costly, outdated approaches that don't serve public safety and divert funding from what actually works.

By contrast, community-based mental health, housing, and youth programs have been shown to prevent crises and reduce reliance on emergency services and incarceration. Redirecting funds from excess incarceration capacity toward these programs would save money and strengthen our community.

This budget is a test of our priorities. We can continue to chase crises with expensive, punitive systems—or we can invest in prevention and healing. I urge you to reject cuts to health and human services, fully fund programs serving vulnerable populations, and reduce spending on underused incarceration infrastructure.

Let's invest in long-term safety and well-being—for all of Santa Cruz County.

Luisa Magarian

District 3