

**From:** [pamela sexton](#)  
**To:** [Board Of Supervisors](#)  
**Subject:** Reject "camp"; Insist on least restrictive programming for youth  
**Date:** Monday, February 24, 2025 4:27:03 PM

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Dear Supervisors,

I am writing to you as a parent, a teacher, and an engaged community member. My own children are young adults, one at Cabrillo and the other at UCSC. I teach English as a Second Language to young adults in Watsonville and facilitate court-mandated positive discipline classes for parents involved with the Probation Department. As part of the local chapter of SURJ (Showing Up for Racial Justice), I study and take action with others to build together the world we need and deserve.

What happens to young people in Santa Cruz County matters to and impacts all of us.

I am writing to urge you to reject the proposal to rename a few cells in the Juvenile Hall "Coastal Redwood Academy" and to instead insist on "least restrictive programs" including release to home with wrap-around support programs through a broad community collaborative. Our youth need support and practice being in community, not the isolation and punishment that being housed at Juvenile Hall is.

Even a short stay in youth detention decreases graduation rates and increases recidivism later in life. Young people are better served by the least restrictive program, allowing them to be at home or in a home-like setting, engaged with and in community, exploring ways to find both belonging and purpose through local activities and organizations. In fact, it is a legislative mandate: *CA Senate Bill 823 - Dept. of Juvenile Justice Realignment* calls for transitioning youth to the "least restrictive appropriate environment" with the goal being to "reduce and then eliminate racial and economic disparities, and reduce the use of confinement in the juvenile justice system by utilizing community-based responses and interventions."

Vincent Schiraldi has extensive experience in juvenile justice research and policy, and if you haven't read his book *Mass Supervision: Probation, Parole, and the Illusion of Safety and Freedom*, I highly recommend you do. The book, alongside stories from people who have experienced probation - either through the juvenile justice system or as adults - has raised many questions about the real effectiveness of the Probation Department. Given current budget challenges, and the massive cost of housing

someone at Juvenile Hall, it is more important than ever to ensure that any money going toward juvenile justice is used in ways that are truly effective, both in the short term and long term.

I want to suggest an audit of the Probation Department to answer questions such as:

- \* What are the existing racial disparities in youth sentencing and supervision practices?*
- \* How does the use of risk assessment tools influence conditions of their supervision?*
- \* Are probation officers adequately trained to address the complex needs of youth under supervision?*
- \* What data exists to demonstrate the effectiveness of probation in reducing recidivism rates?*
- \* Are probation conditions tailored to the specific needs of each individual offender, or are they often overly restrictive?*
- \* How can probation be better integrated with community-based support services to promote successful reintegration?*

I also suggest there be a comprehensive and transparent analysis of what community based resources for youth currently exist in the county, and possibilities for creative alternative programs for youth. Related to this point, I urge you to expand the Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council and the SB823 Sub-Committee to include more community and system-impacted people, as these are important spaces where various groups can come together to build effective alternatives for youth.

In closing I want to say that I attended the October 31st (Halloween) community meeting called by the Probation Dept in response to the BOS push for more community engagement. It was exciting to see many different groups coming together with concern and an interest to collaborate to better serve our youth. That is something to build on, but the Probation Department's lack of transparency about current programs, plans and funding did nothing to build that important foundation.

Thank you for giving care and consideration to this important issue.

Sincerely,  
Pamela Sexton



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When we dream alone, it is only a dream, but when we dream together, it is the beginning of reality.

**From:** [Susan Kohen](#)  
**To:** [Justin Cummings](#); [Board Of Supervisors](#)  
**Subject:** Urgent: Protect Youth Justice—Vote NO on CAMP Designation  
**Date:** Monday, February 24, 2025 4:51:33 PM

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Dear Supervisor Cummings and all Board Members,

I am emailing you to urge you to vote NO on the Juvenile Hall Camp Ordinance to Designate the Santa Cruz County Juvenile Hall as a CAMP facility.

I have been a resident of Santa Cruz County for over 20 years and am a former public school teacher, and have been studying the impacts of youth and adult incarceration for years.

Not only does incarceration not lead to rehabilitation, nor keep our communities safer (see [New York Times article from January 28, 2025](#) and some points from it below), the probation department has failed to include and engage the community in creating a less restrictive program (LRP) alternative but rather continued to move through this process with a business-as-usual attitude. The situation demands immediate and bold action to ensure our young people's safety, dignity, and future in Santa Cruz County. Because of this, we strongly encourage the Board of Supervisors to:

1.  
Vote No On CAMP Designation:
2.  
Expand the Number of Community Seats on the JJCC and SB 823 Sub-Committee
3.  
Conduct an Extensive Analysis of Local Youth Resources
4.  
Conduct an Audit of the Probation Department

Everything I have learned over the years points to the reality that incarceration is not the answer when harm has been caused, and actually leads to more problems. Here are some points from the NYT article mentioned above:

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Research showed that **even brief juvenile incarceration** increased high school dropout rates and adult incarceration.

- Judges often believed that short-term detention could "teach lessons," but **data suggests it made youth more likely to reoffend.**
- Juvenile prisons often have pleasant names like "youth center" or "camp", but they are still prisons. In this case, the "camp" environment is no different than the SYTF.

Also, I would like to talk about the lack of transparency and cooperation by the probation department.

- While the community, including the related Santa Cruz County juvenile justice commissions and committees, were aware of the planned SYTF, the "Ranch Camp" proposal was bundled in with no warning at the Board of Supervisors meeting on October 8, 2024.
- The subsequent attempts to involve the community have been either hastily, inconveniently and poorly executed (the Watsonville meeting on October 31, 2024), or not publicized at all.

**We believe that Santa Cruz County has an opportunity to create and reimagine youth justice for the future. By centering care, accountability, and equity, you can create a system that genuinely supports the growth and potential of every young person.**

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. I trust that you will make a decision that truly demonstrates your care for all of the youth who live in our county.

Sincerely,  
Susan Kohen  
District 3

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Susan Kohen  
she/her/hers



*"When we are taught that safety lies always with sameness, then difference, of any kind, will appear as a threat. When we choose to love we choose to move against fear - against alienation and separation. The choice to love is a choice to connect - to find ourselves in the other. "* bell hooks- all about love

**From:** [regan brashear](#)  
**To:** [Board Of Supervisors](#)  
**Subject:** Vote No on Ranch Camp  
**Date:** Monday, February 24, 2025 3:56:08 PM

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Dear Supervisors:

My name is Regan Brashear and I'm a resident of Santa Cruz on the west side. I've lived in the county for 12 years and volunteer with an organization called SURJ (Showing up for Racial Justice) Santa Cruz County.

I'm writing to you today to ask you to stop any consideration of the "ranch camp" proposed by the county probation department.

From my understanding, the probation proposal appears to rename a few cells in the Juvenile Hall to "Coastal Redwood Academy". This is misleading; it is still juvenile detention. I am very concerned that the "ranch camp" will lead to worse outcomes for youth in our county. Sending youth across the hall to a new cell where maybe the door opens more often is neither a real "step-down" in detention, nor is it appropriate for youth who have committed less serious offenses.

[Research](#) indicates that even a short stay in detention decreases graduation rates and increases recidivism as adults. Young people will be better served by a less restrictive program that keeps them at home or in a home-like setting and engages them in community activities and organizations.

In fact, *CA Senate Bill 823 - Dept. of Juvenile Justice Realignment* calls for the "least restrictive appropriate environment" with the goal being to "reduce and then eliminate racial and economic disparities, and reduce the use of confinement in the juvenile justice system by utilizing community-based responses and interventions."

In addition, I want to see the probation department engage more deeply with the community in creating any "step down" program for youth. I understand that we have the Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council and a related 823 subcommittee; both of these community oversight committees should be engaged more deeply in the process for developing a plan for our system-impacted youth.

Thank you for considering my input,  
Regan

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Regan Brashear

[Somatics Coach](#) / [Filmmaker](#) / [Impact Producer](#)



Schedule a free discovery call for somatic coaching [here](#).

*This email was sent from Santa Cruz, CA. Santa Cruz is located on the unceded territory of the Awaswas-speaking Uypi Tribe. The [Amah Mutsun Tribal Band](#) comprised of the descendants of Indigenous people taken to missions Santa Cruz and San Juan Bautista during Spanish colonization of the Central Coast, is today working hard to restore traditional stewardship practices on these lands and heal from historical trauma. You can learn more and support their work [here](#).*