

From: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
To: [Agenda Management Support](#)
Subject: Item 8 comment_Chavez, R
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From: Rachael Chavez <chavezrachael@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, May 30, 2025 1:44 PM
To: Board Of Supervisors <boardofsupervisors@santacruzcountyca.gov>
Cc: First District <First.District@santacruzcountyca.gov>; Second District <Second.District@santacruzcountyca.gov>; Justin Cummings <Justin.Cummings@santacruzcountyca.gov>; Felipe Hernandez <Felipe.Hernandez@santacruzcountyca.gov>; Fifth District <Fifth.District@santacruzcountyca.gov>
Subject: Budget Input - Focus on Care; Invest in Prevention

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Dear Supervisor Cummings and Board of Supervisors,

I am a long time resident of Santa Cruz, a registered nurse, 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.

As an oncology nurse I've given chemotherapy to patients that live in their cars. I've given chemo to patients who luckily were able to stay at Homeless Persons Health Project's Recuperative Care Center, without which they would either not be able to receive treatment or receive treatment while living on the streets.

Cutting support for programs like the Homeless Persons Health Project, MHCAN, and the Gemma Program would be devastating to my patients, and will only lead to more costly outcomes—such as emergency room visits, avoidable arrests, and harm to our most vulnerable community members. Every dollar spent on housing, mental health care, and community services saves far more than we spend managing the consequences.

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 \$14,000/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, who would be better served in a community based setting. Overall corrections

and the sheriffs department take up an enormous portion of our county general fund. 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 choose to relive the demonstrably failed (and racist) "tough on crime" policies of the 90s by investing in expensive, punitive systems of criminalization—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 incarceration infrastructure.

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

Rachael Chavez

District 3