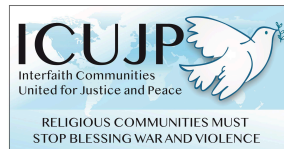




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Demanding Integrity.



California Alliance for Youth & Community Justice



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THE BAR ASSOCIATION OF  
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LA  
PUBLIC DEFENDER



SMART  
justice  
CALIFORNIA



April 3, 2025

Senator Mike McGuire  
President pro Tempore, State Senate  
1021 O Street, Suite 8518  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Senator Scott Wiener  
Chair, Senate Committee on Budget  
1021 O Street, Suite 8620  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Senator Laura Richardson  
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 5  
1021 O Street, Suite 7340  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Assemblymember Robert Rivas  
Speaker of the Assembly  
1021 O Street, Suite 8330  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Jesse Gabriel  
Chair, Assembly Committee on Budget  
1021 O Street  
Suite 8230  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Assemblymember James Ramos  
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No.  
6 on Public Safety  
1021 O Suite, Suite 8310  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: Funding Request for Holistic Defense Services for Indigent Defense Providers**

Dear Senate and Assembly Leaders:

We, the undersigned signatories, respectfully request \$120 million over three years to support indigent defense providers across California in implementing holistic defense

services. This investment would enhance the ability of indigent defense providers to address the complex and interconnected legal, social, and economic issues faced by their clients. This funding is critical in the wake of Proposition 36, in which voters expressed their intent to have individuals in the criminal legal system receive treatment and housing so as to reduce future contacts with the system.

### Background

Holistic defense integrates legal advocacy with comprehensive support services to address the underlying causes of criminal legal system involvement, including poverty, homelessness, and [untreated behavioral health needs](#), and to support clients' re-entry needs, including housing and employment, so as to reduce recidivism.

Studies from jurisdictions that have adopted holistic defense models show significant improvements in outcomes for clients and public safety, including:

- Reduced rates of recidivism.<sup>1</sup>
- Shortened pretrial detention periods.<sup>2</sup>
- Enhanced access to housing, employment, and treatment services.<sup>3 4</sup>
- Long-term cost savings for the criminal justice system.<sup>5</sup>

### Proposed Use of Funds

The requested \$120 million will be allocated to indigent defense providers to:

1. Support the hiring of social workers, mental health professionals, housing specialists, and other front-line staff with experience or training in holistic defense to form holistic defense teams to serve clients;
2. Fund the establishment of pilot programs and the expansion of existing holistic defense initiatives in under-resourced regions and high income-disparity regions;
3. Provide specialized training for defense attorneys and interdisciplinary staff to implement best practices in holistic defense;
4. Support robust data collection and independent evaluation of the impact of holistic defense services on client outcomes and public safety.

We propose that the \$120 million be appropriated in this year's budget and distributed as grants to be used over three years, prioritizing indigent defense offices with high indigent caseloads, limited access to existing holistic services, or high-income disparity regions. Such an investment would represent a critical step toward ensuring equitable access to justice for all Californians, regardless of income and would:

- Improve public safety through reducing recidivism;

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<sup>1</sup>[RAND study finds that Bronx Defenders' holistic defense saved clients 1.1 million days behind bars](#)

<sup>2</sup> [The Effects of Holistic Defense on Criminal Justice Outcomes](#)

<sup>3</sup> [James M. Anderson, Maya Buenaventura and Paul Heaton, \*The effects of holistic defense on criminal justice outcomes\*, Vol. 132, No. 3\(Harvard Law Review January 2019\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Public defenders can open the door to health services | Vera Institute](#)

<sup>5</sup> Fn. 1; 3, 4.

- Improve client outcomes;
- Create long-term cost savings by addressing the root causes of criminal legal system involvement;
- Effectuate the voters' intent in Proposition 36 to have people receive treatment, housing, and reduce recidivism.

For further details, please contact: Rebecca Marcus, California Public Defenders Association [rebecca@gsadvocacygroup.com](mailto:rebecca@gsadvocacygroup.com), or Natasha Minsker, Smart Justice California, [natasha.minsker@gmail.com](mailto:natasha.minsker@gmail.com) Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

**Anne Irwin**  
Smart Justice California

**Kate Chatfield**  
California Public  
Defenders Association

**Jasmin Harris**  
California Innocence  
Coalition

**April Grayson**  
Sister Warriors Freedom  
Coalition

**Brooke Longuevan**  
Local 148 Los Angeles  
County Public Defender's  
Union

**Angel Rice**  
Restoring Hope California

**Raj Jayadev**  
Silicon Valley De-Bug

**Irene Kao**  
Courage California

**Abby Salim**  
Empowering Women  
Impacted by Incarceration

**Anthony DiMartino**  
Californians for Safety  
and Justice

**Paul Briley**  
Legal Services for  
Prisoners with Children

**Maureen Pacheco**  
Pacific Juvenile  
Defender Center

**Melanie Kim**  
San Francisco Public  
Defender's Office

**Shayla Wilson**  
La Defensa

**Grey Gardner**  
Drug Policy Alliance

**Arnold Sowell Jr.**  
NextGen Policy

**Dr. Carole Dorham-Kelly**  
Rubicon Programs

**Israel Salazar Villa**  
California Alliance for  
Youth and Community  
Justice (CAYCJ)

**Colin Ford**  
Fresh Lifelines for Youth

**Misty L. Franklin**  
Restore 180

**Rick Banales**  
Interfaith Communities  
United for Justice &  
Peace

**Sikander Iqbal**  
Urban Peace Movement

**Grecia Reséndez**  
Center on Juvenile and  
Criminal Justice

**Jorge Castillo**  
Safe Return Project

**Mike Farrell**  
Death Penalty Focus

**Flaurie S. Imberman**  
Bend the Arc: Jewish  
Action, CA

**Sadalia King**  
Catalyst California

**Justin Mazzola**  
Amnesty International  
USA

**Tannah Oppliger**  
Californians United for a  
Responsible Budget  
(CURB)

**Patty Barahona**  
Youth Leadership Institute

**Carmen-Nicole Cox**  
ACLU California Action

**Joanne Scheer**  
Felony Murder  
Elimination Project

**Julie Traun**  
Bar Association of San  
Francisco (BASF)

**Lynn Berkley-Baskin**  
Justice2Jobs Coalition

**Ricardo Garcia**  
Los Angeles County  
Public Defender

**Judyanne Vallado**  
San Joaquin County  
Public Defender's Office

**Elena D'Agustino**  
Solano County Public  
Defender

**Stephanie Medley**  
RYSE

**Marcus McKinney**  
Center for Policing Equity

**Veronica Miramontes**  
MILPA

**Ashleigh Herrera**  
HOPE in the Valley

**Gretchen Bergman**  
A New PATH

**Sergio Torres**  
Decarcerate Orange  
County

**Anne Bluethenthal**  
ABD | Skywatchers

**Paul (Khalid) Alexander**  
Pillars of the Community

**Jim Lindburg**  
Friends Committee on  
Legislation of California

**Erin Tsurumoto Grassi**  
Alliance San Diego

**Charles Vignola**  
The Los Angeles  
Regional Reentry  
Partnership (LARRP)

**Antoinette Ratcliffe**  
Initiate Justice

**Annie Rios**  
Uprise Theatre

**Ucedrah Osby**  
Community Interventions

**Simelia Rogers**  
Ella Baker Center for  
Human Rights

**Brendon Woods**  
Alameda County Public  
Defender

**Creiselda Varela**  
Inland Region Reentry  
Collaborative