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03/06/2022

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol, First Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom,

We write to you regarding the proposal in your January budget that calls for the closure of Chuckawalla Valley State Prison.

We believe that the goals and considerations motivating the proposed closure of Chuckawalla Valley State Prison would be better addressed through the closure of other California prisons. In particular, the California Rehabilitation Center in Norco, CA would be a more fitting candidate.

As the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation continues to struggle to fulfill the maintenance needs of California prisons, it is important that the state consider how aging infrastructure is a primary contributor to this financial strain. Notably, the Legislative Analyst's Office's Report on State Prisons suggests that the California Rehabilitation Center requires \$1.1 billion in repairs in order to achieve adequate infrastructure, while Chuckawalla only requires \$430 million. The 12 oldest prisons in California, which includes Norco's California Rehabilitation Center, are in need of \$11 billion in improvements. Opening 35 years ago, Chuckawalla is among the newer prisons; representing a relatively recent investment by the State. Further, Chuckawalla has 24 rehabilitation programs, including the innovative Integrated Substance Use Disorder Treatment program, proven to reduce morbidity, mortality, and recidivism rates.

Chuckawalla Valley State Prison is deeply ingrained into the City of Blythe's community and economy. The prison provides a critical local resource as the city's number one employer—supplying over 850 jobs—and is a driving reason why many of Blythe's residents call the region home. Blythe offers a low cost of living for full-time residents as well as families of the incarcerated. If inmates are forced to move, families could face costly housing increases or even homelessness. Additionally, Blythe residents would feel the impacts of the closure through a noticeable decline in the services the City would be able to provide to address business closures, loss of related jobs in sites, such as school districts, and decreased sales and property taxes from residents migrating out of the city.

Community leaders in Blythe and surrounding communities are—unlike nearly every other community—enthusiastic supporters of the prison in their region. This is in contrast to Norco residents, who have been advocating for the closure of the California Rehabilitation Center for years.

Finally, Chuckawalla plays a crucial role in maintaining Blythe's Palo Verde Hospital. This hospital serves both the Palo Verde Valley and La Paz County and is the only community hospital within 50 miles of Blythe. It is not clear that the hospital's continued operations would be viable if Chuckawalla were to close.

For these reasons, we respectfully request you consider the closure of the California Rehabilitation Center in Norco and we thank you for your continued leadership and dedication to addressing the needs of the residents of California. Should you have any questions, feel free to contact my office at 916-319-2036.

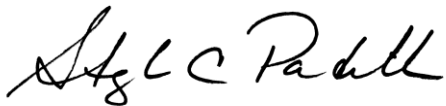
Sincerely,



Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia, AD 36



Senator Kelly Seyarto, SD 32



Senator Stephen Padilla, SD 18

CC: The Honorable Anthony Rendon, Assembly Speaker
The Honorable Toni G. Atkins, Senate President Pro Tempore
The Honorable Phil Ting, Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
The Honorable Nancy Skinner, Chair, Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Committee
The Honorable Mia Bonta, Chair, Assembly Budget Sub-Committee 5, Public Safety
The Honorable Maria Elena Durazo, Senate Budget Sub-Committee 5, Public Safety