



SHANNON D. DICUS, SHERIFF-CORONER

September 1, 2023

Governor Gavin Newsom
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom,

On behalf of the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department, I strongly urge you to reconsider your proposal to close Chuckwalla State Prison, end the lease with CoreCivic for California City Correctional Facility, and deactivate several yards and facilities at six state prisons throughout California. As the Sheriff of one of the most populated and largest geographic counties, I am concerned with how these closures will impact the safety of our local community.

The cited decline in the prison population from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) is not a reflection of the lack of need for bed space in California; instead, it is a shift of the inmate population from the state government to local counties due to a multitude of factors including AB 109, the Criminal Justice Realignment of 2011.

Chuckwalla Valley State Prison is a critical component of California's criminal justice system, providing a secure facility to house and rehabilitate inmates. Closing this facility will strain the resources of law enforcement agencies and make it more challenging to keep our communities safe. Chuckwalla distinguishes itself in the number of rehabilitation resources available to inmates to impact their lives. These programs are critical tools to reduce recidivism and keep our communities safer.

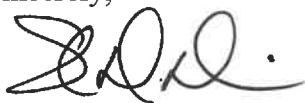
The proposal to further reduce the capacity within CDCR's system can potentially put added pressure on local correctional facilities. Furthermore, I am concerned that these proposals are not considering and fully understanding what our inmate population will be now that the COVID-19 pandemic has ended. The criminal justice system is returning to normal operations.

During the pandemic, one of the most difficult challenges faced by local correctional facilities like San Bernardino County was the refusal of CDCR to accept state prisoners awaiting transfer from our jails to state prisons. This administrative change from CDCR and CDCR's early release of state prisoners has created a significant danger to the public in our communities.

Please understand that my intention to preserve prison facilities should not be misconstrued as advocating solely for an incarceration-based approach to criminal justice. I take tremendous pride in our progress in San Bernardino County by implementing innovative programs and providing treatment to individuals who are genuinely grappling with behavioral health issues such as mental illness and addiction, aiming to reduce repeat offenses. While I believe these initiatives will have a significant positive effect, they should not diminish the necessity for suitable facilities to house individuals convicted of criminal offenses.

For any additional questions regarding my support of Chuckwalla State Prison, please contact me at (909) 387-3671. I appreciate your consideration of my perspective.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Dicus', with a period at the end.

Shannon Dicus, Sheriff-Coroner
San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department