

Dear Board of Supervisors of Mendocino County,

I submit this letter as public comment on the agenda item referenced above. I write in response to the request for funding by the MCSO and to the proposal submitted by the Sheriff's Office to the Board of Supervisors on the item. Additionally, I write to condemn the image of the hog-tied black man included in the proposal.

Sheriff Kendall included data on "crime" in our county for the past six years as part of his basis for requesting additional funds and deputies for his office. The charts labeled "Major Crimes by Year", "Crime Calls for Service" and "DCE/SP Cumulative Statistics" bring up many underlying questions about how our sheriff's office is considering and categorizing "crime" and how this information justifies an increase in personnel by ten duperies. The questions include:

1) "Major Crimes Per Year"

Why is the work of the coroner included as a "Major Crime"? Furthermore, why is there an additional bar graph depicting the number of coroner cases included in the proposal?

We could take this to mean that the MCSO is implying that "Organized Crime and Illegal Marijuana Grows in Mendocino County" are leading to the increase in coroner's cases. However, if you look at the category labeled "Homicides", there is an increase of 5 from 2019, and a decrease of 5 from 2018. The 13 homicides in 2020 aligns with the average number of homicides over the five previous years. There is little to no connection between the increase in coroner's cases and homicides connected to organized crime and illegal marijuana grows.

The repeated claims made by Sheriff Kendall over the past ten months that his office is too busy with domestic violence cases to participate in public health order enforcement is drawn into question by his own "Major Crimes" and "Service Calls" data. In fact, all the major crime statistics submitted in this proposal, except robbery and arson, belie an average year for 2020, with higher levels of crime in most categories evident in preceding years.

2) "Crime Calls for Service"-The number of calls for services to the MCSO, both received and dispatched, is at its lowest since 2015.

3) "DCE/SP Cumulative Statistics" This chart provides no comparison data. It provides no evidence of increase over time or how any of these statistics connect to the homicide, robbery, or assault statistics on the major crimes chart. These numbers are essentially meaningless in the context of this proposal.

All of the failings aside from the proposal, the underlying request speaks to an archaic perspective on the social and civil issues impacting our county. Adding more to our sheriff's department at this time, when so many other programs that directly impact Mendocino residents are underfunded, would be counter to the direction communities are going in order to more effectively address social issues. Increased law enforcement will not address the economic and social issues at the root of crime, let alone the complex situation around the legal and illegal cannabis industry in our county. Our attention and resources, including any requests made to the

state for additional funding, must be directed to the people of this county and not to perpetuate the costly and ineffective law enforcement-prison cycle.

Speaking of the prison system, I am taken aback that Sheriff Kendall's attention is focused on increasing his staff to address an increase in crime that the data does not support instead of on the current situation in the county jail. I encourage the Sheriff and our county leadership to address the situation at hand--the outbreak of COVID in our jail and the failure of the MCSO to address it effectively. We know that people of color bear the brunt of our law enforcement system, as well as of this pandemic. The situation in the county jail and Kendall's failure to enforce masks and mitigation is the perfect combination of these injustices.

This brings up the final point of this letter: the photo of the hog-tied black man included in a public presentation for a request for additional "crime fighting" funds to the Board of Supervisors. Anyone with any historical knowledge of race, rhetoric, imagery and propaganda in this country, is aware of the criminalization of African Americans and its use by people in power. This photo, included in this proposal, reflects deep seeded racial bias and stereotypes. It essentially is an attempt to trade fear for funding. Whether Sheriff Kendall did this intentionally is beside the point. If he used this image purposefully to trigger racial fears, that is abhorrent. If he used this image without understanding of its implications, that is equally as concerning.

I will give the Sheriff the benefit of the doubt and assume he was blindsided by the response to the photo he included in his request for funds. Perhaps he had no idea of its implications until it was explained to him.. Let's say that is true. This is exactly the problem. This isn't about Matt Kendall being a villain. ***This is about someone running our county Sheriff's office having little to no background understanding of race in this country, and therefore, little to no awareness of how racial bias is insipid in its impact on the every day and underlying practices of his own sheriff's department.*** This has countless harmful effects on individuals and our county. Frankly, it is dangerous to people of color and the overall community.

The county, the state, the people must have some prerequisites for bias training, diversity inclusion, or even historical knowledge and context for people in positions of authority. Our Sheriff's statements, behaviors and priorities spotlight underlying issues that must be addressed for the safety and health of our community.

Thank you for your consideration,
Chloe Reed