

Dear Mendocino County Board of Supervisors:

I would ask that the following comment be read into the record concerning your review of, and potential vote on, the Mendocino County FY20-21 budget.

I am emailing today to urge you to vote no on the proposed FY20-21 budget. Instead, I urge you to work to amend the budget towards an ethical and equal reallocation of funds away from the Sheriff's office, jail, and juvenile detention center and towards social services and education programs, effective at the beginning of the new fiscal year. Redirect money away from the police and into social service programs that will benefit public health and our own communities, especially communities of color.

The proposed Sheriff's Department budget for 20-21 is around \$36,000,000, \$14 million of which comes from the county's General Fund. This totals approximately 20% of the general fund dollars available for departments. We are in the midst of a popular uprising against, among other things, police brutality and anti-black racism in policing. Mendocino County does not exist in a bubble outside of the conditions that led to this uprising. Given such, it is inappropriate to allocate these funds to the Sheriff's Department.

Meanwhile, the General Fund is slated to contribute only \$2.5 million to the vital public resources of the library system, museums, environmental health, mental health services, and social services combined. I object to our tax dollars being spent on policing as opposed to community services.

Crime is not random. Crime usually happens when someone has been unable to meet their basic needs through other means. And, studies suggest that less policing results in less crime. So, to really "fight crime," we don't need more police officers - we need more educational opportunities, more arts programs, more community centers, more mental health resources, more affordable housing, as well as more of a say in how our own communities function. We need to support programs that will meaningfully serve our communities without criminalizing them. The threat of criminalization itself is enough for many people to avoid accessing services they desperately need, completely defying the point of providing these services in the first place. We need to find non-police solutions to issues facing our communities and to better fund successful programs that improve the quality of life in Mendocino County, especially programs led by Black and Indigenous people.

I'm not alone in my thinking. Jurisdictions across the country are ending relationships with police departments and exploring what defunding law enforcement would look like for their localities. Mendocino County needs to do the same. I believe this is an inevitability and we should begin re-imagining and building up our own systems of community accountability and support now.

You have a responsibility to listen to and represent your constituents. We want to see real change in the way Mendocino County allocates its resources. Thank you for reading and for adjusting the budget.

Respectfully submitted,
Colin Morrow