



Office of the County Manager

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October 19, 2007

The Honorable Jim Gibbons
Office of the Governor
101 N. Carson Street
Carson City, NV 89701

Dear Governor Gibbons:

As you know, Clark County has long partnered with the State of Nevada to provide juvenile justice services to Southern Nevada. Within Clark County, the Department of Juvenile Justice Services (DJJS) is a unique and complex public service agency that performs more than the traditional Juvenile Court functions of probation and detention. For delinquent youth who are 18 years of age and under, DJJS provides services for intervention, guidance, detainment, treatment, counseling and accountability.

As a result of your request for proposed budget cuts from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), I have recently been informed that the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) expects 24,000 juvenile detention bed days to be cut from the three state juvenile justice institutions. As you may know, approximately 70 percent of the state institutional population originates in Clark County. As a result of the expected cuts, Clark County can expect an increase of 16,800 bed days in juvenile detention for those youth who have been committed to the State and who will be awaiting placement in state institutions. This will increase our average daily population by 46 youth.

Because our juvenile detention facilities are already beyond capacity, the only option for Clark County to accommodate the increase in population caused by the state budget cuts is to increase capacity by opening Zenoff Hall. Based on prior staffing studies, opening Zenoff Hall will require the addition of 44 staff to safely operate the facility at an additional cost to Clark County taxpayers of approximately \$3 million. As a result, every dollar that the State of Nevada cuts from its budget by closing units in DCFS juvenile institutions costs Clark County taxpayers \$2.40.

In addition to the above, I have also been informed that the Division of Child and Family Services proposes to reduce funding to the youth camps operated by Clark and Douglas counties as well as to the Community Corrections Partnership Block Grants. In Clark County, these funds have enhanced local efforts to hold youth accountable for their offenses and to reduce the risk of further juvenile crime. These two programs serve over 350 youth annually with a success rate that exceeds 85%. The proposed cuts will have the effect of reducing the resources to turn the lives of young people around at the same time that the state is shifting more costs from the state to the county.

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Given the current revenue projections in Clark County, I do not expect that we can absorb this additional cost shift from the state to the county. The proposed budget cuts will put Clark County in the untenable position of either overburdening Clark County taxpayers with a disproportionate share of costs for a state function or allowing already overcrowded conditions in the juvenile justice facilities to become more so. Perhaps most troubling is that an increase in overcrowding will likely result in additional lawsuits filed on behalf of the children in the juvenile justice system as well as possible reconsideration by the Annie E. Casey Foundation of Clark County as a site for system reform.

As a result, I urge you to exempt the juvenile justice system from your proposed cuts in state funding. Not only is the juvenile justice system essential to the health, well being, and safety of our community, it is also pivotal to the lives of those it touches. Failing to address the needs of our youth in the juvenile justice system can only lead to further endangering of our community. Moreover, cuts in the juvenile justice system will ultimately cause higher costs in the corrections system and to Nevada taxpayers as the youth offenders of today become the adult offenders of tomorrow.

Sincerely,



VIRGINIA VALENTINE,
County Manager



CHERYLN TOWNSEND
Director, Juvenile Justice Services

cc: Mike Willden, Department of Health and Human Services
Judge William Voy
Senator William Raggio
Speaker Barbara Buckley