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Alameda County
Supervisor Keith Carson, Fifth District

For Immediate Release
Press Release

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Supervisor Carson, Assemblymember Skinner discuss Realignment Proposal at Community Forum

Local elected officials and agency heads hosted a forum on Friday at the Way Christian Center in Berkeley to discuss the impact of Gov. Jerry Brown's realignment proposal to transfer some mental health, foster care, and public safety services to the county level.

Panelists included Supervisor Keith Carson, Assemblymember Nancy Skinner, Alameda County Administrator Susan Muranishi and representatives of affected state and county agencies, including corrections, probation, health and social services. The districts and jurisdictions covered by the panelists include all of the City of Berkeley.

"We in local government support realignment in concept as a means to bring service delivery closer to people in need," Supervisor Carson told the crowd of more than 150 community members. "We look forward to working with the State to ensure that we have adequate permanent funding, flexibility in programming and constitutional protections."

James Sweeney, a former Berkeley City Councilmember, was in attendance and weighed in during the question and answer session. Echoing Supervisor Carson's remarks, he noted that the real issue is permanent funding for the programs that will be realigned.

Formerly incarcerated individuals and their advocates also showed up for the forum to express their concern about rates of incarceration and to voice support for programs that aid former prisoners as they re-enter into society.

Erin Sasse, Chief of External Affairs for the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, explained to the audience that current state prisoners will not be released and sent to counties. Instead, the new law (AB 109) will affect sentencing going forward. Certain non-violent offenders who would have been sent to state prison will now be the responsibility of counties, where officials will have greater flexibility in deciding whether to incarcerate those offenders or put them on probation.

Alameda County Probation Chief David Muhammad discussed the impacts of realignment on the probation system. People who were formerly placed on parole will now be under the supervision of the county probation system. The question is whether the allocation of funds from the state will be sufficient to cover the costs of rehabilitation programs for offenders.

Alameda County Social Services Interim Co-director Lori Jones noted that many families that access Alameda County services are clients of multiple agencies. Planning for realignment is bringing social services, public health and probation all together to the same table to collaborate on creative solutions that will best serve those clients.

To that end, Chief Muhammad is convening a diverse group of stakeholders to take part in the Community Corrections Partnership, a task force mandated by AB 109 to develop an implementation plan for Alameda County. While the law only requires the participation of the Chief Probation Officer, the County Administrator or a Supervisor, the Sheriff, a Chief of Police from a representative city, and the Director of Social Services, Chief Muhammad is going beyond the scope by including judges, the District Attorney, the Public Defender and community groups.

The funding mechanism for the realignment proposal should be included in the State Legislature's budget bill, whose deadline is Wednesday June 15th. If Gov. Brown signs the bill into law, the changes will go into effect on July 1st.



Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson, Assemblymember Nancy Skinner and Lynn Suter of Suter, Wallauch, Corbett and Associates address community members in Berkeley during a forum about the State budget.



Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson addresses community members in Berkeley during a forum about the State budget.



Former Berkeley City Councilmember James Sweeney asks a question at a recent budget forum about the State budget.

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Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson represents the Fifth District, which includes Albany, Berkeley, Emeryville, Piedmont, and parts of Oakland (North Oakland, Rockridge, Grand Lake, Fruitvale, and Dimond District neighborhoods). For more information about District 5 and Supervisor Keith Carson, please call (510) 272-6695 or visit <http://www.keithcarson.org/>