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April 16, 2026

The Honorable Jesse Arreguín
Chair, Public Safety Committee
1020 N Street, Room 545
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 926 (Strickland), Funding for Proposition 36 Act – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Arreguín,

I am writing on behalf of the Kern County Board of Supervisors to express our strong support for SB 926 (Strickland), an urgency measure, which would establish the California Public Safety Services Support Fund.

Upon appropriation of funds from the Legislature, this measure would provide \$400 million in funding for implementation of Proposition 36 in fiscal year 2026-27, to be administered via an equitable grant program by the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC). Additionally, the bill proposes an annual allocation from the state General Fund to the California Public Safety Services Support Fund, to be included in the Governor's January budget proposal at an amount sufficient to fully fund the continued implementation of the proposition.

As political subdivisions of the state, counties are responsible for the delivery of an expansive range of essential services in all communities across California. Critically, this responsibility extends to the provision of services, programs, and treatment required under Proposition 36. Broadly speaking, the initiative increased penalties for certain drug and theft offenses by repealing aspects of Proposition 47 (2014), and it established a new treatment-mandated felony, affording individuals faced with specified drug offenses the opportunity to enter treatment in lieu of incarceration.

To be clear, county entities are the primary implementers of Proposition 36. From county sheriff deputies making arrests and overseeing individuals in local detention facilities, behavioral health departments conducting court-ordered evaluations and delivering individualized treatment for those dealing with substance use disorder or a serious mental illness, county probation officers providing assessments, pretrial services, and supervision, and other criminal justice personnel such as public defender and district attorney staff tasked with delivering necessary services. SB 926 supports this critical workforce by requiring a minimum level of funding for counties to meet the intent of Proposition 36 and the will of California voters who overwhelmingly approved the ballot initiative.

The Judicial Council of California's annual implementation report concluded that filings for Proposition 36 charges have significantly impacted the courts and the broader criminal justice system, totaling nearly 20,000 felony drug cases and roughly 15,500 felony theft cases in the first year alone. This expanded population and increased demand for services adds to the strain on already overloaded county departments, presenting substantial concerns across the larger county eco system.

Most notably, the lack of state funding for Proposition 36 implementation at a time when H.R. 1 is anticipated to shift federal safety net costs to states and counties, amassing up to \$9.5 billion per year for counties alone, will have a devastating effect on Californians statewide. If forced to absorb costs from H.R. 1, every county service will face crippling cuts, including those provided by public safety and behavioral health departments, further impeding the effective implementation of Proposition 36.

For these reasons, the Kern County Board of Supervisors strongly supports SB 926 and respectfully urges the Senate Public Safety Committee to advance this important legislation without delay.

Sincerely,



Phillip Peters, Chairman
Kern County Board of Supervisors

cc: Honorable Members, Senate Public Safety Committee
Honorable Members, Kern Legislative Delegation
Kern County District Attorney's Office
Kern County Public Defender's Office
Kern County Sheriff's Office
Kern County Probation Department
Kern County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services
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