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May 8, 2005

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The Honorable Sally Lieber
Member, California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 3091
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SUPPORT FOR ASSEMBLY BILL 2066

Dear Assemblymember Lieber:

The Little Hoover Commission supports your measure, AB 2066, as amended May 2, 2006, relating to gender responsive strategies for women in prison. In its December 2004 report, *Breaking the Barriers for Women on Parole*, the Commission found that the State has not developed an effective correctional strategy for women offenders – the fastest growing portion of the California prison population. The Commission affirmed that female offenders differ from male offenders in their personal histories and pathways to crime. These differences have important implications for policies and programs in institutions and for community corrections.

Female offenders are far less likely to be convicted of violent offenses than males or to be considered a danger to their community. The majority of female offenders also are victims. Nationally, 57 percent of female offenders have been physically or sexually abused before going to prison, compared to 16 percent of male offenders.

The majority of female offenders are incarcerated in large, remote prisons that undermine the chances that they will become self-sufficient and law-abiding when released. Research suggests that search and supervision practices within prisons often re-traumatize women with histories of sexual and physical abuse, but the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) has not addressed these issues.

The Commission concluded that the State needs to embrace the knowledge regarding the characteristics and needs of female offenders and enact reforms to improve outcomes for them, their children and their communities. It recommended CDCR develop a strategic plan for female offenders and include input from staff and management, as well as statements of values, mission, goals and objectives. It recommended that the plan include an implementation scheme that delineates activities, budgets, timelines and those responsible for the outcomes.

AB 2066 reflects the Commission's recommendations by requiring CDCR to develop a master plan that includes policies and procedures to address the unique gender-based issues that exist for female offenders. For these reasons, the Commission will actively support the measure. As the bill moves through the committee process, I will be writing letters on behalf of the Commission to legislators urging aye votes. If you feel my presence and testimony at a hearing would be helpful, please let me know, and I will make every attempt to be available.

Sincerely,

Stuart Drown
Executive Director

c: Commissioners

Milton Marks Commission on California State Government Organization and Economy ♦ <http://www.lhc.ca.gov/>

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