



State of California

LITTLE HOOVER COMMISSION

April 15, 2009

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Executive Director

The Honorable Loni Hancock
Member, California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 3092
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SUPPORT FOR SENATE BILL 292

Dear Senator Hancock:

The Little Hoover Commission supports SB 292, the measure you have authored to establish alternative incarceration facilities for nonviolent offenders.

The Commission supports this measure based on findings and recommendations in its November 2003 report, *Back to the Community: Safe & Sound Parole Policies*. The report urged reforms to California's parole system that would improve public safety and save hundreds of millions of dollars a year. The Commission called California's parole system a billion-dollar failure and identified four fundamental problems: 1) Prison time is not used to prepare inmates for their eventual release. 2) Available resources – especially those in communities – are not being used to assist parolees who would benefit. 3) The state returns the vast majority of parole violators to prison, even though other sanctions such as drug treatment or short jail stays would cost less and help more. 4) Thousands of times each year, parole revocation is used in lieu of prosecution for parolees suspected of committing new, serious crimes. The Commission determined that local governments and community organizations can be given more responsibility to help offenders successfully re-enter society, reducing recidivism.

In its January 2007 report, *Solving California's Corrections Crisis: Time is Running Out*, the Commission emphasized that policy-makers should reallocate resources to assist counties in expanding local capacity, including jail space, drug treatment programs, day reporting and other locally-based punishment options.

The Commission recommended that the state work with communities to establish halfway houses and other residential facilities in appropriate locations for offenders who need that support to stay out of trouble and out of prison. SB 292 addresses this recommendation by adding another option for community-based corrections for non-violent offenders.

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