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ORANGE COUNTY YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES
Outline of testimony to the Little Hoover Commission
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1. Already known and reported.

- Orange County Youth & Family Services (OCYFS) does not need to testify what's already known and reported. We are not the experts in re-engineering government. I am here to testify our business (which is a an interest for all in California) and that through this testimony, the Commissioners will be reminded, lest we are forgotten, of our work within the realms of the proposed changes made by the Governor.

2. Governor's proposed changes make sense.

- Who wouldn't share in the Governor's desired outcome that "the reorganization will *deliver a safer society at less cost to the people of California*" while establishing "clear lines of reporting, accountability, responsibility and performance assessment"? In fact, I am here to testify that that part of the desired outcome is already happening since 1981.
- Governor's case for reorganization is valid. We have had the opportunity to work with two different divisions within the Department of Corrections. The "individual operating units" as the Governor puts it supports his conclusion that it has "weakened responsibility and accountability across the system, leading to costly duplication and failure to leverage scale".
 - To illustrate, the inability to share best practices within the same Department is puzzling at best. How could one division provide a steady flow of inmates to our facility while another division can hardly do the same? Our 47 bed facility should never have even **ONE** empty bed-**EVER**. But that is what is happening today. It is an obscene waste of valuable space and money. Do not misunderstand our position. Our organization does not make any money on empty beds. We are at a per diem contract and though it seems to save money by not paying us for an extra bed, the State, the inmates, the prisons, in short, everyone, lose as indicated by the number of inmates re-offending after being released.

3. OCYFS (and everyone else's) Business: "deliver a safer society at less cost to the people of California"

- As a non-profit organization for over 30 years, we have been operating what we refer to as halfway houses or community reentry centers (the newer term) providing an environment that transitions the inmate into the community with better equipped tools such as a full-time employment, access to educational or vocational training, literacy and computer skills, personal responsibility, including parenting skills, victim awareness workshops and community service activities and other transitional services designed to increase the probability of a successful parole experience.
- Since the 1970's from our Federal Pre-Release program to our current contract with the Department of Corrections, our organization's mission as excerpted from the bylaws has been "to design, implement, operate and evaluate programs for the deinstitutionalization, reintegration and socialization of appropriate individuals under conditions structured to maximize the safety of the community. Philosophically the organization is consciously committed to the principles of personal responsibility, planned change, social equality and justice. "Operationally, we have supported the State in its own efforts, but specifically provided to the surrounding communities, services that the Governor would like to see through his proposed changes. That is, **a safer society at less cost to the people of California** and remain effective.
- Due to tough political battles, there aren't too many community reentry centers and there are even fewer ones with organizations such as ours that have impeccable records in operating such programs within a community setting. Given the context, the State in its admirable efforts to restructure must include the fact that **you cannot afford to lose us.**

4. "More" is unnecessary.

- In the Governor's conclusions, he reminds and outlines to us what the proposed changes will bring about including "making communities safer by doing **more** to ensure that inmates and youth wards leave custody better prepared to function in society". There really is no need for more as much as there is a need to **DO**. "More" seemingly connotes double duty or extra this or that. We are in place **NOW** to provide the services even under the structure of the current Department of Corrections.

5. Don't forget about us in the long journey.

- We know the problems. But there seems to be a fragmented look into the problems. A group is focused on these problems while another point to that set of problems. Then we have the problem du jour-whatever is making the headlines that day. In the meantime, our organization at OCYFS almost silently struggles to maintain financially a program that is promising and proven to be effective except we have hardly any participants.
- In the midst of these proposed changes, I am here to share with you what our organization has been, is doing and hopefully will continue to do. If these changes come about, I predict we will be better equipped to continue our work.
- Please don't forget about us. As the Governor states, the task of the proposed reorganization will be "a long journey". Sometimes you tend to forget the purpose of one's journey. I am here to request to the commissioners not to forget about us when reporting on the Governor's proposed changes. We are living proof of improved services.
- Over 30 years of experience in the operation of community based programs has demonstrated that individuals, particularly when presented with appropriate alternatives and opportunities, can and do change negative behavior patterns which threaten both individual freedom and the safety of the community. Our organization remains cognizant however that the process of change is slow and difficult, occurring only when problems are recognized and confronted. OCYFS staff remains committed to treating individuals humanly and honestly, attempting to facilitate positive change while enforcing programmatic and organizational policies designed to simultaneously assist the individual and provide protection for the community.
- And, lest you forget at any time in this long journey when it becomes rather difficult and arduous, please look to us, see what we are doing, what we have been doing and you need not look any further to be reminded.
- We are the very programs that can and has been saving money for the State but more importantly, endeavor to fulfill that loftier yet very attainable goal of safer communities.

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