

STATE CAPITOL
P.O. BOX 942849
SACRAMENTO, CA 94249-0010
(916) 319-2010
FAX (916) 319-2110

Assembly California Legislature



MARC LEVINE
ASSEMBLYMEMBER, TENTH DISTRICT

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E-MAIL
Assemblymember.Levine@assembly.ca.gov

WEBSITE
www.assembly.ca.gov/Levine

May 20, 2015

The Honorable Mark Leno
Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
State Capitol, Room 5100

The Honorable Shirley Weber
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
State Capitol, Room 6026

RE: Proposed Closure of Sonoma Developmental Center in State Budget

Dear Chairpersons Leno and Weber:

This letter is to express my serious concerns with the proposal in the Governor's May Budget Revision calling for closure of the Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) by the end of 2018 and the accompanying trailer bill language requiring the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to provide the Legislature with a closure plan by October 1, 2015.

Community leaders and stakeholders strongly disagree with the closure of SDC. However, if SDC is to close, I believe closure in 2018 is far too short a period of time to develop a sagacious transition plan for SDC residents which are some of the most vulnerable populations served by DDS.

Therefore, I respectfully request that if closure of SDC remains in the budget, that the appropriate Senate and Assembly Budget Subcommittees consider the following changes in adopting budget language relative to closure of SDC:

1. Delay the closure to allow a more comprehensive approach to be taken to protect patient health and safety;
2. Delay DDS's deadline for providing a closure plan to October 1, 2016; and
3. Require DDS's closure plan to include, but not be limited to, addressing the following issues:
 - Protecting the health and safety of the residents as the top priority;
 - Keeping residents close to their families;
 - Requiring increased funding for regional centers to accommodate the transition of SDC residents to the community;
 - Protecting against any potential negative economic effect on the community;
 - Recognizing the dedicated professionals at SDC and retaining skilled and specialty jobs in the community;
 - Protecting the environment including potentially preserving the land around SDC as a wildlife corridor; and

DISTRICT OFFICES: 3501 CIVIC CENTER DRIVE, ROOM 412 • SAN RAFAEL, CA 94903 • (415) 479-4920 • FAX (415) 479-2123
11 ENGLISH STREET • PETALUMA, CA 94952 • (707) 576-2631
50 D STREET, SUITE 301 • SANTA ROSA, CA 95404 • (707) 576-2631



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- Requiring that the closure plan be developed in cooperation and consultation with the Parent Hospital Association, the County of Sonoma, representatives of Sonoma County's state and federal legislative delegations, SDC employee representatives, Sonoma County land conservation groups, members of the Sonoma Valley community and other interested stakeholders.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,



MARC LEVINE

cc: Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr.
Assembly Speaker Toni Atkins
Senate President Pro Tem Kevin De León
Assemblymember Tony Thurmond, Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee #1
Senator Holly Mitchell, Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee #3
Assemblymember Bill Dodd
Senator Mike McGuire
Senator Lois Wolk
Assemblymember Jim Wood
Nancy McFadden, Executive Secretary for Governor Brown
Members, Assembly Budget Committee
Members, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee