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Governor Brown's May Budget Breaks Promise to Reinvest $100 Million Into Communities

PICO California issued the following statement in response to Governor Brown's May revise budget:

Last Friday Governor Brown released his revised budget for 2016-17, and expressed that revenue is much less than expected. Service providers and communities have been waiting for the Governor to reinvest the projected $100 million saved from Proposition 47; however, the Governor's revised budget projects savings at just $39.4 million, significantly less than previous estimates.

The independent and non-partisan Legislative Analyst's Office estimated that Prop. 47 would save the state more than $100 million every year. The Governor's estimated savings circumvents the will of state voters. Voters made it clear that they expect less money to be spent on prisons and more money to be spent on crime prevention as well as substance abuse and mental health treatment programs to stop the cycles of crime. While the Governor's revised budget reflects an increase of $10.2 million compared to what was proposed in the January budget, the Governor's calculations are based on an inaccurate formula and still fall short, failing to prioritize the people who need this money most.

PICO California, joined by a number of organizations and coalitions has been calling on the Governor to use a more accurate formula in estimating Prop 47 savings. Even the Legislative Analyst's Office has pointed out that the budget formula created to calculate Prop 47 savings should be different and that a more accurate formula would result in $100 million in state savings. There are three main problems with the current formula: The formula underestimates how many fewer people are in prison as a result of Prop 47, the formula over-estimates how much implementing Prop 47 has cost the state court system and the formula is based on a savings of only $9,000 per inmate, despite the fact that California spends $62,000 per year to house one prisoner.

"This is a huge disappointment that will keep us from supporting vulnerable Californians who are looking to get back on their feet," said Bishop Cornelius Bowser a faith leader with PICO California's affiliate San Diego Organizing Project who is formerly incarcerated and former gang member. "I see countless people in my church and in my community that are working hard to reenter society, but without funding for job placement, housing, and mental health services, the struggle edges closer to impossible."

Over the coming weeks, along with its coalition partners, PICO California will continue to push Governor Brown to keep his promise around Prop 47 savings. As a multi-faith organization, PICO California sees a better future for communities – we can build safer neighborhoods with more opportunities if we reinvest funds into education, jobs and housing support for formerly incarcerated people and their families.

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PICO California is the state's largest community organizing network. We organize in 73 cities, 15 school districts, and in more than one-half of the state's Senate and Assembly districts. PICO California was established in 1994, bringing together local federations from throughout California to affect meaningful budget and policy change at the state level. Over the past 20 years, our organizing and policy advocacy has resulted in increased investments in education and healthcare, and in programs and services that are critical for working families. Together, we represent 480 congregations and 450,000 families of diverse economic, racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds committed to advancing racial and economic justice in California through organizing, advocacy, and voter engagement. Visit www.PICOCalifornia.org *to learn more.*

PICO California and its federations are non-partisan and do not endorse or support candidates for office.

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