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COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

October 11, 2011

Honorable Arthur A. Garcia
Assistant Presiding Judge
Santa Barbara Superior Court
312 East Cook Street
Post Office Box 5369
Santa Maria, California 93456-5369

Reference: Response to Santa Barbara Civil Grand Jury Titled, "*Where is the Truancy Program in Santa Barbara County? Truancy is Troubling . . . for Everyone!*" (Published June 15, 2011 on the Grand Jury Web Site)

Judge Garcia:

The Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors (Board) is providing its response to the above-referenced Civil Grand Jury Report. Like the Civil Grand Jury, the Board recognizes the value of compulsory education and consistent attendance in school. We further recognize that early truancy intervention by parents and schools is critical in preventing a series of at-risk behaviors among adolescents in this community. The social and economic benefits of limiting truancy and increasing high school graduation rates are vitally important to this Board. We appreciate the Grand Jury's concern and desire to keep all young people on track to graduate from high school.

As directed by the Grand Jury, responses are provided in accordance with Section 933.05 of the California Penal Code.

Finding 2:

The currently are no available federal or state funding for truancy programs.

The Board agrees with the finding.

Recommendation 2a:

That the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors fund at least one full-time position in the Santa Barbara County Office of the District Attorney (DA) to administer an enforceable truancy program for all Santa Barbara County schools.

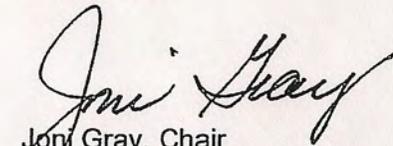
This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not reasonable.

Funding an effective truancy prevention program is a challenge. Given the lack of federal or state funding, the Grand Jury recommendation would require an investment of at least \$170,000 in County General Funds. In the current budgetary climate even this important effort to stem truancy is unaffordable for the County alone to finance. The Board recognizes that the downstream costs of delinquency, other at-risk behaviors and lowered educational attainment are significantly higher than the requested FTE. The same argument could be made for almost any social service or law enforcement budget decision.

In the State of California's 2008-2009 budget reduced the Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act (JJCPA) funding for the Truancy Program which cost the County of Santa Barbara District Attorney's office \$141,000 in revenue. The 2009-2010 District Attorney's office budget reduced the Truancy Program by an additional \$76,000. Since Fiscal Year 2007-2008, the Board has increased the funding of the DA's office by 19.9%. With this additional funding the DA's caseload averages are still among the highest in the state. Any future increases in funding to the DA may be used to reduce the caseload that will lead to more effective prosecutions of violent and property crimes.

During past Budget Hearings, the Board offered to partner with school district administrators to reinvest a portion of the additional Average Daily Attendance (ADA) dollars derived from truancy reduction activities. The offer was not accepted. The Board again invites a dialogue between the County Executive Office, the District Attorney and school district officials to consider a joint County and Education funding plan that will support this program beginning in the 2012-2013 Budget Year.

Sincerely,



Joni Gray, Chair
Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors

Cc: Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
Ted Sten, Foreman, 2011-12 Santa Barbara Civil Grand Jury
Chandra Wallar, County Executive Officer
Joyce E. Dudley, District Attorney