

OYA Director's Message

November 9, 2009

Dear Colleagues,

We wrote to you a few weeks ago about the state of the economy and the potential impacts to state government if voters in the January 26 election reject tax increases on corporations and high-income individuals. Today we want to give you an update.

As we noted last time, the Legislative Fiscal Office has instructed agencies to conduct budget reduction exercises for cuts of 5 percent and 10 percent. LFO wants to know how these levels of budget cuts would affect services. Because OYA's executive leadership team believes these cuts – if actually taken – would harm public safety, we also are offering a 2-1/2 percent reduction option.

A 2-1/2 percent cut in General Fund dollars equals \$6.65 million. This is on top of the more than \$8 million shortfall we already are managing this biennium. As you can see, even a 2-1/2 percent cut is significant. We will be advocating with LFO for the importance of continuing to fund the work we do to promote public safety, hold youth accountable, and encourage youthful offender reformation and restitution.

Our approach to this initial exercise is to implement reductions proportionally throughout the entire juvenile justice system. Although we have communicated with our partners and some stakeholders, the short timeframe for this exercise did not allow us to fully discuss our approach and the potential impacts with all those concerned. We will be doing so during the course of the next 60 days.

In the past, this agency has proposed closing facilities instead of units within facilities as a way to achieve a higher rate of savings. The overhead savings achieved are greater when closing a facility than when reducing beds across several facilities. But while closing a facility is one option, doing so places a burden on the affected staff and community. Our budget reduction exercise looks at several different options along with associated impacts, but without targeting specific facilities or community programs.

As soon as we have finalized the numbers of staff and youth placements affected, we will provide that information to you. And remember, at this point this is still an exercise. In the meantime, please know that we value your commitment to the work of this agency and support all that you do.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Colette S. Peters". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and "P".

Colette S. Peters
Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fariborz Pakseresht". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized.

Fariborz Pakseresht
Deputy