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September 22, 2020

AN OPEN LETTER IN SUPPORT OF THE "REDUCING CRIME AND KEEPING CALIFORNIA SAFE ACT"

On behalf of the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors, I am writing in support of the "Reducing Crime and Keeping California Safe Act," which will appear as Proposition 20 on California's November 2020 General Election ballot.

The initiative would amend a law (AB 109, 2011) and two ballot measures (Prop. 47 in 2014 and Prop. 57 in 2016), all of which were intended to reduce California's prison population. AB 109 shifted nonviolent, non-sexual offenders from state prisons to local jails, as well as shifting responsibility for the supervision of certain parolees to counties. Proposition 47 changed several crimes from felonies or "wobblers" (crimes chargeable as felonies or misdemeanors) to misdemeanors. And Proposition 57 made parole easier for felons convicted of nonviolent crimes.

But whatever the intentions of these so-called reform measures, serious flaws in them left already overcrowded local jails burdened with the influx of state prisoners, added to the caseloads of under-resourced probation departments, and resulted in surges in illegal drug use, retail theft, car break-ins, burglaries, and other property crimes.

Proposition 20 addresses how some violent crimes and serial theft are classified, giving local prosecutors the discretion to charge certain theft and fraud crimes as felonies or misdemeanors, rather than only misdemeanors. The initiative also expands the list of violent crimes for which early release is not an option, including child sex trafficking, assault of a peace officer and felony domestic violence.

The initiative also requires the California Board of Parole Hearings to consider an inmate's entire criminal history when deciding parole, not just their most recent commitment offense; and requires a mandatory hearing to determine whether parole should be revoked for any parolee who violates the terms of their parole for the third time.

Finally, Proposition 20 would require people convicted of certain misdemeanors previously classified as wobblers or felonies before 2014, such shoplifting, grand theft, drug possession, domestic violence and prostitution with a minor, to submit to the collection of DNA samples for state and federal databases.

Because of Proposition 20's great potential benefit to the safety and well-being of the people of El Dorado County, we wholeheartedly endorse its passage.

Brian Veerkamp
Chair, Board of Supervisors