



Maricopa County

Board of Supervisors

Don Stapley, District Two
301 W. Jefferson, 10th Floor
Phoenix, Arizona 85003-2148
Phone: 602.506.7431
Fax: 602.506.6362
TDD: 602.506.2000
dstapley@mail.maricopa.gov

March 8, 2010

The Honorable Robert Burns,
President, Arizona State Senate

The Honorable Kirk Adams,
Speaker, Arizona House of Representatives

Arizona State Legislature
1700 W. Washington
Phoenix, AZ 85007

Dear President Burns and Speaker Adams:

I am writing to express the County's deep concern regarding the Governor's proposal to transfer the financial responsibility for the Arizona Department of Juvenile Corrections to the counties. It is clear the State has a grave budget crisis and you are trying to quickly address the FY 2010 and 2011 budgets. We, as a body, appreciate your aggressive approach to solving problems sooner rather than later.

Maricopa County was appalled when the Governor proposed shifting financial responsibility for a State agency to the counties. We immediately approached Executive staff and asked for necessary information to examine such a mandate. Their response was less than forthcoming. The transfer of a State agency to the counties is something that should only come after a thoughtful policy discussion where all stakeholders participate.

On Friday, March 5th, Supervisor Kunasek met with the Governor's staff in an effort to find a reasonable solution. Maricopa County offered to assist the State with a one-time financial arrangement. Mr. Kunasek also discussed the creation of an Executive commission on juvenile justice reform without a predetermined outcome. He left the meeting with an understanding that there was agreement on pursuing this proposal. We have since learned that the Governor's staff is characterizing the County as "unresponsive" and "uncooperative".

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The Executive has not put forward a viable policy position that such a shift of responsibility is in the best interest of the State, the counties or the youth that are treated within the State Department of Juvenile Corrections. Worse, the Governor proposes separating the financial responsibility from administration. The Courts would run the system and the counties would be expected to pay.

We strongly object to this type of "blank check" management.

We find it remarkable, and even reckless, that the counties, who have been proactive during this prolonged economic downturn, are facing a disastrous proposal in the State budget which dooms counties to a fiscal crisis.

Maricopa County has historically stepped forward to assist the State in times of crisis but must insist that long-term and crippling impacts not be placed upon the property taxpayers of Maricopa County. As you know, we are governed by a constitutional levy limit and it does not allow us to cover the cost associated with the juvenile transfer. In other words, we couldn't do it if we wanted to.

I understand legislative leadership's desire to move a budget quickly this week. Please remember that our taxpayers are your taxpayers. The County stands ready to finalize a mutually agreeable assistance package, but we neither accept, nor have the capacity to fund, the present proposal that includes the juvenile corrections transfer as a foregone conclusion.

Sincerely,



Don Stapley
Chairman

C: The Honorable Janice K. Brewer
Supervisor Fulton Brock
Supervisor Andy Kunasek
Supervisor Max Wilson
Supervisor Mary Rose Wilcox
David R. Smith, County Manager
Sandi Wilson, Deputy County Manager