



PRESS RELEASE

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## LEGAL ADVOCATES FILE OPPOSITION TO PROPOSED CLOSURE OF SANTA BARBARA JUVENILE COURT

The Youth Law Center and California Rural Legal Assistance Inc. today filed a letter in opposition to the Santa Barbara Superior Court's plan to close the juvenile court in Santa Barbara and relocate juvenile court proceedings to the Jury Assembly Building. Closing the juvenile court will increase the amount of time that young people spend in shackles and increase the risk that the confidentiality of juvenile court proceedings will be compromised. Although the rationale for the proposed closure is cost savings, the opposition letter documents numerous costly modifications that will need to be made to the Jury Assembly Building before it is suitable for use for juvenile hearings.

"It's clear that the Superior Court hasn't adequately considered the safety and welfare of detained children," said Youth Law Center Equal Justice Works Fellow Virginia Corrigan. "From failing to provide a space for youth to consult with their attorneys to marching young people up an outdoor staircase in handcuffs and leg shackles, the proposed closure compromises young people's rights and safety at every step of the way. Closing the juvenile court would cause more problems than it solves."

The letter also details problems with the way the Superior Court notified the public about the proposed closure. Under California law, the public must be given an opportunity to comment on any proposed court closure. But the notice provided by the Superior Court states that the juvenile court will be closed 4 days after the deadline for public comment. This short turn-around raises concerns the Superior Court will not seriously consider public comments before closing the court. And despite the fact that nearly two-thirds of young people in the juvenile court school system are either Spanish speakers or come from a home where Spanish is the primary language, the Superior Court did not provide a Spanish-language version of the notice, in violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and California law.

"Spanish-speaking youth and their families will be directly impacted if the juvenile court closes," said California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc.'s Rural Education Equity Program Director Franchesca Gonzalez. "They deserve an equal chance to voice their concerns regarding the proposed closure. Without a Spanish-language notice, these families don't even know that this is happening and have been unlawfully shut-out from the public comment process."

The Youth Law Center and California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc. urge the Executive Officer of the Court to reconsider the proposed juvenile court closure which will have devastating impacts on detained youth in Santa Barbara County.

The notice of the closure can be found here <http://www.sbcourts.org/index.shtm>