

The logo features the acronym 'OYA' in a white, sans-serif font on the left. To its right, the words 'In the Loop' are written in a white, cursive script font. The entire logo is set against a solid purple rectangular background.

# OYA *In the Loop*

March 31, 2009

## **Thirty Percent Budget Reduction Proposal**

Late on Friday, we submitted our response to the Legislative Fiscal Office's request for 30 percent budget reduction recommendations. I have attached that document for your easy reference.

What these recommendations represent are the beginning of a process that will include careful scrutiny by the Legislative Fiscal Office, members of the Public Safety Subcommittee of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means, the full Committee on Ways and Means, the full Legislature and, ultimately, the Governor. All along the way there will be opportunities to weigh in by providing oral and/or written testimony.

Retirements and the budget situation have given me the opportunity to fine-tune the Central Office organization, but besides that, the choices left were bad and worse. We really had to look to our mission and the value of the juvenile justice continuum. As you can see, we chose to rely on making the juvenile justice system proportionately smaller. All parts of the juvenile justice continuum were impacted by these reductions.

I try to remain positive and hopeful, but I am having trouble identifying any good that can come out of this level of reductions. My biggest fear, of course, is that it will get worse before it gets better.

Unfortunately, with the short time frame we were given to make 30 percent reduction recommendations, we were not able to move forward any sweeping policy changes that might save us money in the long run. Many people have written with ideas to refine the juvenile justice system, and I am hopeful that there will be some momentum to do so in the interim between legislative sessions.

One effort is underway, spearheaded by the legislative counsel to the Judiciary Committees, that is bringing together public safety partners to identify some immediate efficiencies. Phil Cox and Fariborz Pakseresht represent OYA on that committee.

Now, back to the budget document. If you aren't used to reading these types of spreadsheets, I'm happy to explain.

Pages one and two provide detail on the budget reductions we've already taken (labeled first, second and third increments). The fourth and fifth increments (pages 3 and 4) total the latest \$41 million that comprises another ten percent of our budget.

The list is prioritized. At the top of the list are items we recommend reducing first. Note that the Central Office activities and programs I wrote to you about last week are listed first. As you work your way down the list, you can see the line items that make up roughly the first half of the \$41 million (increment 4) and the second half of the \$41 (increment 5 on page 4).

The reduction priorities show that we're cutting in rough proportions. We recommend closing close custody beds as we reduce grants to counties and reduce contracted community treatment slots. Our close custody facilities are the largest part of our budget and in order to reduce by \$ 41 million, close custody reductions look enormous.

Ultimately, the decision is rests with the Legislature in negotiation with the Governor's Office. Our job now is to be responsive to the direction we receive from the Governor and the Legislature.

We are prepared to talk with the Legislature about different scenarios such as looking at different ways to apportion the cuts between facilities, community beds, and county juvenile department grants, or such as looking at different facilities to close.

As you probably recall, in our recent work with the Governor's Office and the Legislature to balance the 07-09 budget, we did not end where we started with our initial proposals.

And, therefore, I think there could be changes to the proposals we just submitted. I do think we will suffer major reductions to the juvenile justice system, but they could be different than the ones in this attachment. We need to remain cautiously hopeful!

I am sincerely heartened by the number of emails I have received from you that, rightfully, express your concern while being supportive of our mission. Here's an example from a colleague in our Columbia office that expresses the youth-centered professionalism of most of our staff:

"I wanted to thank you for all of information that you provide. Although, the news is not good, but at least I feel that it is as accurate as it can be. Who knows how it will all end up. Your news letters at least tell me what I am looking at in the future. We need to just keep our heads up and working for the youth and families."

Hang in there. This isn't over yet.

Bobby