

RECEIVED during BOS  
2/27/2024 @ 5:00 pm  
ob

My name is Amanda Perez, and I work as a Social Worker in the Freedom Project of the San Francisco Public Defender's Office. The Freedom Project advocates to ensure people who are rehabilitated but still serving long prison sentences can get back to court for a second look, based on their current circumstances, and to ensure all services needed for successful reentry are available. We are extremely proud to boast a ZERO recidivism rate since being properly staffed, with a holistic team of attorneys, social workers, and paralegal staff.

The Governor's proposed budget cuts \$40 million to the Public Defender Pilot Program (PDPP) in 2023-24, which is the third and final year of the pilot program. We are grateful to this Board for considering the resolution being introduced today by Supervisor Chan, which urges the Governor and Legislature to eliminate this proposed cut, which negatively impact both the Public Defender's office and the SF Bar Association. -

Over the last five years, several state laws have recognized the need to reevaluate prison sentences after the passage of time and strenuous rehabilitation efforts. These laws allow judges to determine whether additional incarceration is now counterproductive given a person's demonstrated redemption and the significant contributions they could make to their families and communities if allowed to re-enter society.

The Freedom Project has done amazing work with these funds, and is ready to do more.

- The Freedom Project has helped reunite 84 individuals with their communities since we began in 2020—46 of whom were serving life sentences.
- Incarcerating elders and other people who are ready to return home is expensive. From July 2020 - July 2023, we've saved the state of California \$136.5 million.
- Not only do we help people come home, we connect them with vital health services, and housing. For example, 100% of our clients have stable housing when released.

This work is important in meeting the needs of San Franciscans. Though our city's Black population is just 5%, 55% of those in prison from San Francisco are Black. Elder and youth offenders suffer disproportionately. Despite very low recidivism rates for elders, 47% of the people in prison on San Francisco cases are over 50, 28% are over 60, and 8% are 70 or older. And despite research showing nearly all young people "age out" of offending, youth offenders account for 31% of imprisoned San Franciscans.

~~Without PDPP funds in San Francisco, approximately 500 cases eligible for resentencing will go unreviewed and the people behind those cases will continue to languish in prison, wasting precious monetary resources and weakening public safety.~~ Please support this resolution. Thank you.