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**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF TUOLUMNE**

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August 2, 2022

Judge of Superior Court
Honorable Laura Krieg
Tuolumne County Superior Court
12855 Justice Center Drive
Sonora, CA 95370

Re: Response to Grand Jury Report – **Mother Lode Regional Juvenile Detention Facility dated June 14, 2022**

The following is submitted in response to the 2020-2022 Grand Jury Report as it pertains to the Mother Lode Regional Juvenile Detention Facility. The Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors, County Administrative Officer, Chief Probation Officer, and MLRJDF Superintendent wish to extend their gratitude to the Grand Jury members for their time in preparing the final Grand Jury reports. Please accept this as a joint response.

Finding #1. The Grand Jury found that MLRJDF provides an exceptional and positive environment for detained youths that has reduced recidivism and fostered rehabilitation through their trauma-informed services and a focus on respectful, responsible, and safe behavioral goals.

Response: Agree *We are proud of the exceptional services we provide to justice-involved youth and believe our use of evidence-based programs, coupled with our emphasis on treatment, allows youth to heal from past trauma, reduce criminogenic risk factors and learn skills to be productive members of our community.*

Finding #2. Despite the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic, a motivated and creative staff have adapted and maintained high quality educational programs and behavioral health treatment.

Response: Agree - COVID-19 resulted in significant challenges to the overall operations of the facility. Despite this, our staff sought out innovative ways to continue providing high quality rehabilitative services in a safe manner for the youth we serve.

Finding #3. The COVID-19 pandemic reduced programs offered by volunteers, including religious, gardening, recreational, and other activities that have negatively impacted enrichment programs.

Response: Agree - At the height of the pandemic, we were required to temporarily suspend some programming. We have continued to work closely with our local Public Health Department and the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) throughout the pandemic to ensure we are appropriately balancing the need to provide critical services while simultaneously protecting the health and safety of the juveniles we care for.

Recommendation #1. The Tuolumne County Grand Jury recommends continued work with the Department of Public Health, parents or guardians of youths, staff, and prospective volunteers to develop and implement appropriate COVID-19 mitigation measures that will allow a return to enrichment activities that are currently curtailed by September 30, 2022. **(F3)**

Response: This recommendation has been implemented - Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, facility staff has been working closely with the Tuolumne County Public Health Department to ensure facility operations continue with appropriate safety precautions in place. The Health Department has provided technical assistance on staff and youth testing has assisted in the procurement of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and has facilitated regular meetings with MLRJDF and Sherriff's Office staff to discuss issues specific to managing a pandemic in a correctional setting. Additionally, they have prioritized youth vaccinations in the facility and have arranged for on-demand vaccine appointments for any facility staff interested in receiving the vaccine and/or booster. The Health Department has also conducted annual inspections of the facility in part to evaluate our overall COVID response and mitigation measures.

As of January 25, 2022, the facility resumed all enrichment activities with mitigation measures in place to provide for the protection of youth and staff. Activities provided by local volunteers and community members are currently underway at a level comparable to those in place before the outbreak of the global pandemic.

Finding #4. A gap in security is evidenced by the escape of one youth. A successful grant application for security upgrades is noted.

Response: Agree - The Probation Department sought out a facility infrastructure grant to pay for security enhancements that will mitigate the risk of future escapes. The Department is working with County Facilities, and the Board of State Community Corrections to resolve known issues in compliance with the necessary approval processes required by the State.

Recommendation #2. The Tuolumne County Grand Jury urges implementation of security upgrades by December 31, 2022. (F4)

Response: This recommendation is partially implemented and may not be fully implemented until December 31, 2023 - The Probation Department has been awarded a grant to address several needed improvements to the overall security of the juvenile facility. Security improvements designed to prevent future escapes include modifications to identified deficient secure areas and upgrading the existing surveillance electronic equipment in place. Work is underway to address the necessary facility modifications and improvements to the security electronics equipment.

As the juvenile facility was constructed using SB 81 grant funding, the department will need to seek additional approval for structure modification from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) and the State Public Works Board (SPWB) before making any changes to the facility. The recommendation of the grand jury to complete the security upgrades by December 31, 2022, does not appear likely given the grant requirements. However, the Department is prioritizing modifications, and we do expect to address the most critical issue posing a risk by December 31, 2023.

Finding #5. Occupancy rates are being optimized and costs per youth per day are lower than some alternative placements, saving the county costs for detained youth.

Response: Agree - Our partner counties continue to express appreciation for the quality of services we provide. Our overall utilization rates have significantly increased in comparison to the first two years of operation. Additionally, contract renegotiations with partnering counties in Fiscal Years 2020-21, and again 2022-23 will provide offsetting revenues that significantly reduce operational costs for the County.

Finding #6. Increasing occupancy to full capacity will require recruitment and retention of additional Juvenile Correction Officers through competitive wage scales and opportunities for advancement.

Response: Agree - The Mother Lode Regional Juvenile Detention Facility has a total of twenty-five detention/commitment beds and five Camp beds. Given our

current staffing levels, we self-impose a facility capacity of sixteen youth. The current capacity and staffing levels appear to be meeting the detention needs for youth in our region. Like other public safety departments, we have experienced challenges recruiting and retaining qualified staff. Increasing the capacity would result in the need for additional staff and potentially increase costs to the County.

Recommendation #3. The Tuolumne County Grand Jury recommends that county Human Resources conduct a review of the salary structure, particularly for entry level staff, at MLRJDF by December 31, 2022. (F6)

Response: This recommendation requires further analysis. *The staffing shortages at the juvenile facility have caused retention issues. The County is about to begin negotiations with the Deputy Sheriff's Association.*

While the Department recognizes compensation as a significant factor in the recruitment and retention of staff, we do not believe it sole determinant for employees when deciding on career options. We believe the overall culture of the department plays a far greater role in keeping staff motivated to come to work. As such, department leadership goes to great lengths to continually assess the culture of the facility and manage decisions in a way that takes employee satisfaction and wellness into account.

The Chief Probation Officer and the Facility Superintendent are both members of the County's Recruitment and Retention Steering Committee. We are actively working with other county leaders, including the Board of Supervisors, Human Resources, and the County Administration on strategies to improve recruitment and retention efforts for the Juvenile Correctional Officer series. We hope to see improvements in these areas come out of the collective bargaining process by December 31, 2022.

Recommendation #4. The Tuolumne County Grand Jury recommends that MLRJDF develop a multi-year plan for accommodation of additional youth and a corresponding staff recruitment plan for additional juvenile correction officers by December 31, 2022. (F6)

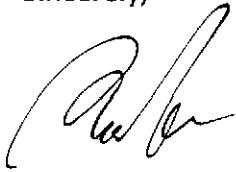
Response: This recommendation requires further analysis – *The County will need to complete research to determine if the region and/or County needs additional beds.*

The Probation Department's recommended budget for Fiscal Year 2022-23 included the addition of a new Senior Correctional Officer position for the MLRJDF which was approved by the Board of Supervisors. Additionally, the adopted budget in the prior Fiscal Year included the replacement of a vacant Probation Aide position with a new Juvenile Correctional Officer position and the upgrading of a Senior Juvenile Correctional Officer to a Supervising Probation Officer. As a

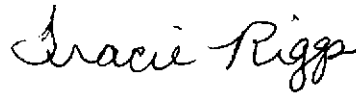
result, the Department has a more robustly staffed and balanced ratio of supervisors to staff within the facility. There are also more promotional opportunities in place for staff to develop within the facility and the department. We remain committed to assessing the staffing needs of the facility each year, and we will continue to make recommended changes to the Board as needed.

We appreciate the opportunity to respond to the above findings and recommendations.

Sincerely,



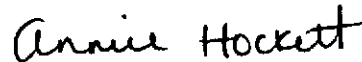
Daniel Anaiah Kirk,
Board Chair



Tracie Riggs,
County Administrator/Personnel Officer



Daniel Hawks,
Chief Probation Officer



Annie Hockett,
Facility Superintendent