

Create your personal statement for the County Community Input Sessions to Consider Alternatives to a Jail

Use this easy three-step process to prepare yourself to participate in one of the upcoming Community Input Sessions (Thu July 8 @ 6-8p or Sat July 10 @ 1-3p) on behalf of the Care First, Jails Last Coalition. With your help, we can influence the decision about better ways to use resources once earmarked for a new Santa Clara County jail.

What the Care First Coalition wants: *We call on the Board of Supervisors to divest from the harms of the criminal punishment system, and to invest the resources into Black and Brown community-led models of safety, restoration, and healing.*

The Care First Coalition's guiding principles are: 1) We are stopping the jail. 2) We need to create non-carceral alternatives to the root issues that fuel incarceration. 3) We center the experiences and leadership of those who are incarcerated, formerly incarcerated, their families and loved ones.

Prepping your statement in 3 easy steps...(and don't worry if you don't want to make a statement or don't have time to write one. Just showing up and reiterating the coalition principles is great...however you feel comfortable.)

- **Step 1:** There are four key reasons NOT to build a new jail and TO create community-centered, non-carceral solutions. Please read through them and choose the one that sparks the most passion for you:
 - A. [Dismantle Systemic Racism](#)
 - B. [Address Mental Health Issues](#)
 - C. [Strengthen Community and Families](#)
 - D. [Incarceration Doesn't Prevent Crime](#)
- **Step 2:** Draw from the above material to write your own personalized statement using the following framework (in four parts, each part is 1-2 sentences in length).
 1. **Intro:** I'm <name>, I live/work in <city/district> and am a member of SURJ at Sacred Heart, part of the Care First, Jails Last coalition.
 2. **Talking point:** State what you want to see done to strengthen public safety instead of a new jail, and why. Try to emphasize that in rejecting the status quo we have a vision for the future, such as: I am against building a new jail because... And I am for strengthening public safety by... [NOTE: At the four links above, you'll find "talking point samples" you can use or paraphrase.]
 3. **Personal twist:** Why is this important to you? Share a personal story or insight that deeply affected you. A few examples:

- a. A first-hand experience or a story (e.g. A friend told me about a mentally-ill man whose cellmates taunted him so much that it repeatedly triggered his psychosis.)
- b. A value that SURJers share (e.g. mass incarceration of Black and Brown people who can't afford bail arose from white supremacy, and as a white person, I am committed to eliminating that insidious legacy.)
- c. What keeps me up at night about all this (e.g. I think about the man in a recent documentary called "Time" who entirely missed out on raising his six kids because of a 60-year prison sentence for stealing \$5,000)

- 4. **Out-ro:** Restate your request and its importance succinctly
- **Step 3:** Practice delivering your statement out loud until it feels natural and smooth to you. It should run less than two minutes.

New to decarceration work? Refer to this [infographic](#) from Critical Resistance.