

May 19, 2020

Supervisor Brennan, District 1
Supervisor Campbell, District 2
Supervisor Kirk, District 3
Supervisor Gray, District 4
Supervisor Rodefer, District 5
Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors

Sent via email

Dear Supervisors,

When I started at the Tuolumne County Superintendent of Schools Office, one of my responsibilities was to develop the Alternative Education program which serves at-risk and expelled youth. Many of the students enrolled in these programs were also classified as juvenile offenders and had become involved with Juvenile Probation. When intervention and rehabilitation did not work, the only recourse was to send them out of county for a higher level of care. I saw increased foster care/residential treatment placements, an elevation in mental health hospitalizations, and placement in juvenile detention facilities and programs out of county. I can attest that the vast majority of the kids returned to our county with increased criminal knowledge, deplorable academic achievement, and broken family systems. The schools in our county experienced the fiscal and social impacts of trying to serve kids who had received uneven academic support, a lack of attention to learning disabilities, and a disconnect from families and their schools.

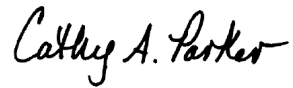
Over the last two decades, the county leaders recognized that we needed to provide something better for our kids. They acknowledged how sending them out of the county was devastating not only to the kids but also to their families and, ultimately, to this community. Numerous Tuolumne County leaders over the last 20 years all understood the importance of opening this facility and providing its related programming. They knew that Tuolumne County was uniquely positioned to make this aspiration a reality because our community works collaboratively and has a commitment to serve everyone, including kids who need guidance and rehabilitation. They knew this community needed a facility that could offer a place for the personal safety of kids. We also now recognize that with the rise of serious criminal offenses, there is a need to ensure the public's safety. In the program our county has developed, we provide multiple treatments, mental health services, educational options, and job training experiences. We provide support and transition back to school districts. We provide continued services long after their detention. It is a program that changes and saves lives.

I understand the fiscal impacts of the last few months and am fully aware of the challenges in the next few years. The choices we have to make as leaders are not to be envied and will cause heartache no matter the decisions made. The negative impact on the lives of kids and their families will be overwhelming if you decide to close the Gold Ridge Educational Center and the Mother Lode Juvenile Detention Facility. We

will lose any ability to maintain the costs associated with providing mandated services to kids who must be detained and lose control over the quality of the treatments, education, and assistance that must be provided.

The right thing is to keep our children in our county, under our watchful eye, and in our hearts. Do the right thing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cathy A. Parker". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cathy Parker

Tuolumne County Superintendent of Schools Office

Cc: The Honorable Judge Segerstrom, Tuolumne County Superior Court
Dan Hawks, Chief Probation Officer, Tuolumne County
Tracie Riggs, Chief County Administrator, Tuolumne County