

CORRESPONDENCE FROM THE OCTOBER 1, 2024  
LEGISLATIVE POLICY COMMITTEE

## Sabha, Tamer

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**From:** Michelle Parris  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 1, 2024 12:32 PM  
**To:** Madison, Steve; Lyon, Jason; Masuda, Gene; Rivas, Jessica  
**Cc:** Harvey-Williams, Brenda; Sabha, Tamer  
**Subject:** Opposing Item 2 + what Pasadena will lose with Prop 36  
**Attachments:** 10.1.24 Vera Public Comment. Item 2 - Oppose.pdf

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Dear members of the legislative committee,

I understand you will be considering whether to take a position on Prop 36 this evening. I urge you all to take a No on Prop 36 position and am attaching Vera's public comment. I also wanted to share a resource we created that might be of interest. We recently published a [research brief](#) showing that Prop 36 risks cutting funding from key LA County programs that help prevent crime before it happens (things like housing services, drug treatment and more).

**In Pasadena specifically, for example, Prop 36 risks cutting funding for the following proven effective programs:**

- Just last year, Pasadena's police department, fire department, and public health departments received \$1.1 million to fund a program that will help [one third of unhoused Pasadenans](#) off the street and into the housing and drug treatment they need.
- Similarly, in Pasadena, the police department has received \$2.51 million to fund substance use disorder programs.
- The funding for these programs is at risk if Prop 36 passes.

Please let me know if you have any questions, and thank you for your consideration.

Thank you,

**Michelle Parris**  
Director, Vera California

**[Vera Institute of Justice](#)**  
634 South Spring Street, #300A  
Los Angeles, CA 90014

(pronouns: she/her)

Subscribe [here](#) to receive periodic updates about our work in California and opportunities to become involved.

October 1, 2024

Pasadena City Council, Legislative Policy Committee

Via email: [smadison@cityofpasadena.net](mailto:smadison@cityofpasadena.net); [jlyon@cityofpasadena.net](mailto:jlyon@cityofpasadena.net);  
[gmasuda@cityofpasadena.net](mailto:gmasuda@cityofpasadena.net); [jrivas@cityofpasadena.net](mailto:jrivas@cityofpasadena.net)  
CC: [bharveyw@cityofpasadena.net](mailto:bharveyw@cityofpasadena.net); [tsabha@cityofpasadena.net](mailto:tsabha@cityofpasadena.net)

**Re: In Opposition to Item 2: Motion, Entitled, “Support of Proposition 36 Allow Felony Charges and Increases Sentences for Certain Drug and Theft Crimes on the November 5, 2024 State General Election Ballot.”**

Dear Legislative Policy Committee of the Pasadena City Council,

My name is Michelle Parris. I am the program director of Vera California, a local initiative of the Vera Institute of Justice, which is a national organization working to end mass incarceration, protect immigrants’ rights, and build safe, thriving communities. **I urge the committee to reject the City Manager’s proposal and instead take position to oppose Proposition 36 on the November 2024 ballot.**

Instead of funding the care first programs Pasadena desperately needs, which are proven to prevent crime—things like drug treatment, homelessness prevention, victims’ services, and K-12 school programs—Prop 36 would strip more than **\$100 million** each year in funding for those vital services.<sup>1</sup> **In Los Angeles County**, these programs have served **more than 10,000 people** with excellent results:

- The rate of new convictions for people who participate in these programs is more than **four times lower** than that of people coming out of state prison.
  - Only **10 percent** of people in the county’s programs faced a new criminal conviction in the years after incarceration, compared to almost **42 percent** rate statewide.
- In one Los Angeles County program, 86 percent of participants left the program with housing, and **more than half found employment**.<sup>2</sup>

**Pasadena itself** – including its **police department, fire department, and public health department** – is at risk of losing funding for critical and proven effective programs if Prop 36 passes. Just last year, for example, Pasadena’s police department, fire department, and public health departments received 1.1 million to fund a program that will help **one third of unhoused Pasadenans** off the street and into the housing and drug treatment they need.<sup>3</sup>

Prop 36 will worsen existing disparities in jails and prisons. Even though studies show that **white people shoplift more**, Black people are **three times more** likely to be

arrested for retail theft. For organized retail theft, Black boys and young men aged 15-24 make up **24 percent of arrests**, despite making up **just 0.4 percent of California's population**.<sup>4</sup>

Prop 36 will also worsen drug use in Los Angeles by defunding successful treatment programs and sending more people to jail and prison, which are not set up to help people with substance use disorders.<sup>5</sup> Overdoses in California prisons have **doubled** in recent years, and people leaving jail and prison are up to **129 times more likely to overdose**.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, by sending more people to jail and prison, Prop 36 will worsen California's homelessness crisis. People who have spent time in jail or prison are **10 times more likely to be homeless**, and people who are unhoused are **11 times more likely to be arrested** than people who have a stable home.<sup>7</sup> It will also reduce funding for successful programs that help people find stable housing.

**We urge the committee to vote “NO” to oppose this motion to support Prop 36.** Vera's experts and researchers would be glad to provide more information or answer questions—you can contact me at

Sincerely,

*M. Parris*

**Michelle Parris**  
Program Director  
Vera California

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<sup>1</sup> Californians for Safety and Justice (CSJ), *Mass Incarceration Ballot Initiative: A New Proposed Ballot Initiative Offers No Treatment, Only Punishment* (Oakland, CA: CSJ, 2024), <https://perma.cc/NLA9-9PWS>.

<sup>2</sup> Vera Institute of Justice, *Proposition 36 Risks Cutting Millions in Funding that Helps Thousands of Angelenos* (Los Angeles: Vera, 2024), [https://vera-advocacy-and-partnerships.s3.amazonaws.com/Vera%20CA\\_Los%20Angeles%20Prop%2047%20Funding%20Research%20Brief.pdf](https://vera-advocacy-and-partnerships.s3.amazonaws.com/Vera%20CA_Los%20Angeles%20Prop%2047%20Funding%20Research%20Brief.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> City of Pasadena Public Health Department, *Prop 47 Grant Program, Local Evaluation Plan*, (Pasadena, CA: 2023), <https://www.bscc.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/Pasadena-Local-Evaluation-Plan.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Vera Institute of Justice, *Retail Theft Crackdown Will Increase Mass Incarceration, Worsen Racial Disparities, and Harm Youth in Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Vera, 2024), [https://vera-advocacy-and-partnerships.s3.amazonaws.com/Vera%20CA\\_Los%20Angeles%20Retail%20Theft%20Racial%20Disparities%20in%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf](https://vera-advocacy-and-partnerships.s3.amazonaws.com/Vera%20CA_Los%20Angeles%20Retail%20Theft%20Racial%20Disparities%20in%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Emily Widra, “Addicted to Punishment: Jails and Prisons Punish Drug Use Far More than They Treat It,” Prison Policy Initiative, January 30, 2024,

<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2024/01/30/punishing-drug-use>.

<sup>6</sup> Don Thompson, “California Prison Drug Overdoses Surge Again After Early Treatment Success,” LAist, February 17, 2024, <https://laist.com/news/health/california-prison-drug-overdoses-surge-again-after-early-treatment-success>; and Ingrid A. Binswanger, Marc F. Stern, Richard A. Deyo, et al., “Release from Prison—A High Risk of Death for Former Inmates,” *New England Journal of Medicine* 356, no. 2 (2007), 157–65, 161, <https://perma.cc/L49X-7MZ7>. Researchers agree that people leaving incarceration have a higher risk of overdose death, but estimates of likelihood differ by study.

<sup>7</sup> Lucius Couloute, “Nowhere to Go: Homelessness among Formerly Incarcerated People,” Prison Policy Initiative, August 2018, <http://perma.cc/2JST-EEJC>; and National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty (NHLCP), *Housing Not Handcuffs 2019: Ending the Criminalization of Homelessness in U.S. Cities* (Washington, DC: NHLCP, 2019), <https://perma.cc/NT7W-TDTH>.

## Sabha, Tamer

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**From:** Jessica Farris <...>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 1, 2024 3:21 PM  
**To:** Sabha, Tamer; Stevenson, Garrett  
**Subject:** Agenda Item #2 (Prop 36 resolution)--Oppose  
**Attachments:** 10.1.24 ACLU SoCal Written comment for Pasadena CC Prop 36.pdf

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Hello,

Please find my written comment for today's Legislative Committee meeting. We are urging the committee not to support Prop 36.

Thanks,  
Jess

October 1, 2024

Via e-mail

Members of the Pasadena City Council Legislative Committee

**Re: Agenda Item 2- Request that the Pasadena City Council Legislative Committee oppose Proposition 36**

Dear Members of the Pasadena City Council Legislative Committee:

ACLU of Southern California urges you to *not* to support Proposition 36 (“Prop 36).

Prop 36 is wrong for the city of Pasadena and harmful to the state of California.

Californians deserve to feel and be safe. Prop 36 is a dangerous step away from safety. It would roll back large swaths of Proposition 47 (“Prop 47”), which, by all measures, [reduces incarceration without increasing crime](#), [decreases recidivism](#), and delivers around [100 million dollars](#) in annual funding for services proven to [help people with addiction issues](#), [alleviate houselessness](#), and [reduce crime](#).

In Pasadena, Prop 47 dollars have helped fund [Flintridge Center](#) and [Learning Works](#)—organizations working to help people get and stay on their feet—as well as services that police, firefighters, and public health departments [use for unhoused people in Pasadena](#) and substance use disorder programs. Prop 36 could gut that funding.

Prop 36 would also add new, counterproductive, and harmful penalties which would allow third drug possession and petty shoplifting to be charged as felonies, despite [study after study](#) showing that longer sentences do not deter crime and that just [one day in jail](#) is so destabilizing it increases the likelihood of re-arrest.

In short, Prop 36 passing would mean fewer services proven to keep Californians safe and more Californians’ lives devastated by incarceration and harm. “Prop. 36 is not the solution; it’s a step backward,” according to Santa Clara County District Attorney Jeff Rosen.

For all these reasons and more, Proposition 36 is opposed by Governor Newsom, the California Democratic Party, Speaker Robert Rivas, Senate Pro Tem Mike McGuire, League of Women Voters, California Nurses Association, California Teachers Association, National Union of Healthcare Workers, Disability Rights California, SEIU, Smart Justice CA, and many other elected officials and organizations.

We urge you to join the legions of Prop 36 opponents and resoundingly vote no to supporting Prop 36.

Please let me know if you have any questions and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Farris', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jessica Farris  
Senior Policy Counsel  
ACLU of Southern California