

Dear (Assemblymember/Senator)

I/we am/are a (resident/member/Board) of (AD or Senate district, community group, Dem Club or other organization), writing to express concerns over the high rates of deaths in custody in San Diego County jails. We are asking that your legislative office request an investigation by the Joint Legislative Audit Committee (JLAC) to determine if these deaths are excessive compared to other large counties in California, and if future deaths could be prevented with changes to training and procedures.

San Diego County is the second largest in California. Under Sheriff Bill Gore, 158 men and women have died while in custody. The local Community Law Enforcement Review Board (CLERB) has reported and investigated many of these deaths.

However, a few years ago, there were so many deaths being reviewed that the CLERB staff could not complete their work under legal timelines, and had to dismiss 22 cases without findings.

Even though the CLERB does not provide racial or ethnicity data in their annual report, it appears 82% of the people who have died in custody were from BIPOC communities, raising additional concerns about racial disparities in San Diego's criminal justice system. One young Latina who died was pregnant, and failed to receive proper medical care at the time of her death.

In addition, 80% of the people who have died in county jails were awaiting trial. They had not been convicted of a crime when they died.

Finally, the survivors and family members of many of these men and women have successfully sued San Diego in wrongful death cases. Large settlements- paid by taxpayers- are costing us millions of dollars each year, as well as requiring related staff hours and costs to defend the Sheriff's Department in court, file appeals, etc.

For all these reasons, we ask that you submit a request to the Joint Legislative Audit Committee, requesting an investigation to determine if the number of deaths in custody and related legal liabilities and settlements are disproportionately high in San Diego County, and if there is a pattern of racial discrimination in these deaths.

I/we look forward to hearing back from your office, and will be happy to provide additional information if needed.

Sincerely,