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COUNTIES' LARGE DISPARITIES IN IMPRISONMENT UNDERLIE ONGOING PRISON CRISIS

San Francisco, CA: One of the primary objectives of California's Public Safety Realignment (AB109) is to encourage counties to develop and implement best practices and alternatives to incarceration. Counties must limit their use of state prisons to those offenders who have committed serious, violent, or sexual crimes.

A report by the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice (CJCJ), *[Beyond Realignment: Counties' Large Disparities in Imprisonment Underlie Ongoing Prison Crisis](#)*, analyzes newly released data from the last quarter of 2012. This report shows new admissions to California prisons are down by 34 percent since before Realignment. However, while many counties have dramatically reduced their prison commitments for low-level offenses, others continue to send these offenders to state prison at a high rate, resulting in consequences for all Californians.

- California's counties differed significantly in their contribution to the prison population decline: 14 counties showed no change or increases in new admissions. Most of these counties already had higher rates of prison admission than the state average.
- People arrested for felonies in Kings County are more than twice as likely to serve time in state prison as those in Los Angeles, and 10 times as likely as those in San Francisco.
- Statewide, 4 percent of felony drug arrests result in commitment to state prison. The figure ranges from 17 percent in Kings County to half of a percent in Contra Costa County

These disparities do not only impact those arrested in counties with high rates of imprisonments, but all California taxpayers. With taxpayers spending \$51,889 per year for each inmate, the cost of imprisonments by major counties ranges nearly 10-fold, from \$12,300 per felony arrest in Kings County to \$1,300 in San Francisco County. State-dependent counties also bear greater culpability for prison overcrowding, while the costs of the resulting litigation and oversight are borne by all counties. Thus, taxpayers in more self-reliant counties are subsidizing counties that rely on the state to house their offenders.

"Realignment is founded in the premise that counties provide better rehabilitation and reentry for low-level offenders than do state prisons, yet some counties continue to be dependent on state prison for offenders other counties are successfully serving locally," says study co-author Mike Males, who will present these results today at the 77th Semi-Annual Meeting of the Association for Criminal Justice Research, in Sacramento. "The rest of the state is footing the bill for around 17 counties that continue to over rely on incarceration."

Read the full publication at: http://www.cjcj.org/files/Beyond_Realignment_March_2013.pdf

If you would like more information about this topic, or to schedule an interview with Mike Males or Lizzie Buchen, please contact Selena Teji at cjcjmedia@cjcj.org or (415) 621-5661 x. 123.

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