

From: Darla Letourneau [mailto:letournd@peoplepc.com]
Sent: Thursday, March 20, 2008 9:07 AM
To: Senator Lisa Carlton (carlton.lisa.web@flsenate.gov)
Subject: Support correctional substance abuse programs
Importance: High

Senator Carlton,

As the chair of the Senate's Fiscal Policy Committee, on behalf of the Zonta Club of Sanibel-Captiva, I urge you to support funding for correctional substance abuse programs, including the Governor's proposed initiative to reduce recidivism by increasing substance abuse treatment funding. The economic downturn in Florida and its impact on State and local revenues, along with the recent passage of Amendment 1, make it imperative to find ways to cost-effectively meet the needs of the citizens of Florida. The Governor's offender's substance abuse proposal is a wise investment—the \$28 million initiative will result in a first year savings of as much as \$277 million in costs, reflecting a reduction of new prison beds needed. Investing in substance abuse programs from offenders is a wise investment that will reduce overall costs for government and its taxpayers and, at the same time, improve the quality of life for Floridians. That is the kind of “win-win” outcome that we need to meet the challenges of our growing state.

The Governor's substance abuse and juvenile justice proposals represent a new policy direction that is most encouraging—investing in prevention and diversion strategies is a much better approach than building more and more jails. This is good policy on three fronts:

- Most effective treatment for individuals,
- Best way to foster safe communities (due to lower recidivism rates for offenders who receive needed treatment),
- Most effective way to reduce overall government (and taxpayer) expenditures.

During these difficult times, it is important that our elected officials show true leadership. It would be a tragedy to adopt the Department of Corrections proposal to eliminate all of the existing \$37 million for correctional substance abuse programs as well as the \$28 million Governor's initiative, in an effort to meet their 10% cut cutting goal. To do so, will cost Floridian's more today, and much more tomorrow with guaranteed worse outcome for public safety.

Thank you for considering our views.

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