



\$30 Million Public-Private Partnership Launched to Support Returning Citizens, as California Urgently Reduces Prison Populations to Curb Impact of COVID-19

Philanthropies and nonprofits partner with the State of California and Governor Gavin Newsom to provide much-needed reentry services

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (August 27, 2020) — Today, as COVID-19 spreads through prisons and jails, philanthropies and nonprofits joined the State of California and Governor Gavin Newsom to announce “Returning Home Well,” a new public-private partnership that provides essential services — like housing, health care, treatment, transportation, direct assistance, and employment support — for Californians returning home from prison after July 1, 2020. These are individuals that have either met their natural release date or are being released on an expedited timeline due to COVID-19. The State announced an initial commitment of \$15 million, which will be matched by philanthropic contributions for a total goal of \$30 million.

“In these unprecedented times, we are committed to providing essential services to those who are returning home to their families and communities,” said California Governor Gavin Newsom. “It is imperative to our public health and public safety, and it is a testament to the generosity of spirit that runs so deep across our state, that so many of our California-based philanthropies and nonprofit partners are stepping up to help provide these critical supports.”

“We applaud Governor Newsom for investing in this long-needed infrastructure to help keep people and families safe during and after the pandemic,” said Jay Jordan, Executive Director of Californians for Safety and Justice. “Supporting reentry services for people coming home is a well-researched and proven model for reducing recidivism and helping people achieve success in their journey home.”

In recent months, COVID-19 cases have risen dramatically among California’s prison population. As in other confined spaces, risk of infection — among those incarcerated and prison staff — is extremely high. In response, the State of California has taken important, life-saving steps to expedite the release of over 5,000 individuals who were already on track to go home, all with less than a year left to serve. However, those returning are often left without essential services that make them particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 and its economic fallout. This new public-private partnership between several state departments, philanthropy, and frontline reentry services providers ensures that people have the support they need for a safe, healthy, and successful reintegration.

“We’re proud to support a public-private partnership that asserts the need for justice reform with a racial equity lens,” said Dr. Robert K. Ross, MD, President and CEO of

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The California Endowment. “We must strive for a justice system that focuses on health care and support services as the first options, instead of on the approach of incarceration which has failed so many. Our California communities need and deserve to thrive in a healthy environment free from trauma.”

“People impacted by the justice system are profoundly and disproportionately at risk of contracting and dying from COVID-19-related illnesses,” added Dr. Priscilla Chan, Co-Founder of the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative. “We not only need to reduce our prison population, we also need to provide significant and ongoing support to returning citizens so they, their families, and communities can stay safe and thrive over the long-term.”

Recently, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation projected that a large percentage of individuals set to come home will have the need for housing assistance and coordination of post-release services. Rates of homelessness among regular releases have risen from a low of 13 percent last August to 15.5 percent in August 2020, and formerly incarcerated people are almost [10 times more likely](#) to be homeless than the general public. This makes the need for reentry support in the pandemic environment even more critical.

“CDCR understands how vitally important it is to expand reentry programs for the incarcerated population returning to their communities,” CDCR Director of Division of Rehabilitative Programs Brant Choate said. “Ensuring formerly incarcerated persons have the housing and tools they need to focus on living a better life when they get out are key to successful community transition, good public safety, and ultimately help save taxpayer dollars.”

Across California, hundreds of community-based organizations — like [A New Way of Life](#), the [Anti-Recidivism Coalition](#), [Center for Employment Opportunities](#), [Homeboy Industries](#), [HealthRIGHT 360](#), [WestCare California](#), and more — are working tirelessly to provide assistance across California. With a \$15 million commitment from Governor Newsom and funding from private philanthropy, resources are going to organizations providing transportation home from prison, quarantine housing, emergency supportive housing, residential treatment, access to health care, employment services, direct assistance, and more. [Amity Foundation](#) is serving as the hub for housing and services delivered by a network of frontline organizations across the state.

“Over the last four months, we have seen the impact that safe housing, job training, and other reentry services can have for returning citizens,” said Sam Schaeffer, Chief Executive Officer of the Center for Employment Opportunities. “Despite the retracting economy, we’ve seen people thrive when given real, meaningful support. That’s what this partnership is about — giving people a strong foundation to stand on coming out of one of the most challenging periods of their lives.”

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Over \$26 million of the \$30 million goal has been committed and services are already being provided to returning citizens. Foundations and individual donors aligning funding for this effort include the Meadow Fund, Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, Rosenberg Foundation, The California Endowment, Heising-Simons Foundation, Future Justice Fund, Art for Justice Fund, Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, Open Society Foundations, The California Wellness Foundation, Ford Foundation, Agnes Gund, and Kaitlyn & Mike Krieger.

“This moment requires bold leadership, and we thank Governor Newsom and our partners in philanthropy for joining together to support returning citizens in reclaiming their lives,” said Tim Silard, President of the Rosenberg Foundation. “Reentry supports are proven and critical to helping people reintegrate back into our communities.”

“Expediting release is necessary, but so is ensuring that services are available in a way that supports those returning home to achieve successful outcomes,” said Doug Bond, CEO of the Amity Foundation. “Supporting this type of service is an essential piece of a much broader, long-term public health and social progress solution.”

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About Amity Foundation

Amity Foundation is dedicated to the inclusion and habilitation of people marginalized by addiction, trauma, criminality, incarceration, poverty, racism, sexism, homelessness and violence. We strive to improve health, and promote environmental, social and economic justice. Amity is committed to research, development, implementation and dissemination of information regarding community building. For more information please visit www.amityfdn.org

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