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COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

September 15, 2026

Honorable Patricia Kelly
Presiding Judge
Santa Barbara Superior Court
County Courthouse
1100 Anacapa Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

FILED
SUPERIOR COURT of CALIFORNIA
COUNTY of SANTA BARBARA
09/18/2026
Angela Braun, Executive Officer
BY *Mark Hanson*
M. Hanson Deputy Clerk

Reference: Response to Santa Barbara Civil Grand Jury report titled, "Gangs of Santa Barbara County: Should the Schools Do More to Address Them?"

Judge Kelly:

Please find attached the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors (Board) response to the above referenced Civil Grand Jury Report. As directed by the Grand Jury, all responses are provided in accordance with Section 933.05 of the California Penal Code (PC). Pursuant to PC Section 933 (c) and (d), responses are provided on behalf of the Board of Supervisors.

Sincerely,

Signed by:

Bob Nelson

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Bob Nelson, Chair

Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors

cc: Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors

**Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
Response to the Santa Barbara County Grand Jury 2025-26 Report
“Gangs of Santa Barbara County: Should the Schools Do More to Address Them?”**

The Grand Jury’s report acknowledges the ongoing challenges posed by criminal street gang activity in Santa Barbara County and highlights the important role schools play in creating safe environments that deter gang recruitment and influence. The County appreciates the Grand Jury’s thoughtful assessment of current school-based prevention practices and existing gaps in student safety. The County concurs that reducing gang influence requires coordinated, community-supported efforts, and commends the Grand Jury’s ongoing commitment to strengthening youth safety throughout Santa Barbara County.

Finding 8

A task force comprised of governmental and community-based organizations in the area would aid local authorities to reduce gang effectiveness.

The Board of Supervisors partially agrees. Multi-agency collaboration is valuable, and the County believes that youth-safety efforts are most effective when they are community-driven, rather than government-directed. For this reason, strengthening existing community-led models is preferable to establishing a new County-created task force.

Recommendation 8

The Grand Jury recommends that the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors form a North County Youth Safety Partnership to work on gang intervention and prevention. To be implemented by December 31, 2026.

This recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted. The County recognizes the importance of collaboration among governmental agencies and community-based organizations, and as noted within the Grand Jury’s report, several such collaborative structures already exist within Santa Barbara County. The South Coast Youth Safety Partnership (SCYSP), operated through CommUnify, illustrates how community-rooted collaborations can effectively support at-risk youth and reduce gang activity. The SCYSP is jointly sponsored by all municipalities on the South Coast, including the County. In North County, the City of Santa Maria previously operated the Mayor’s Task Force on Youth Safety, which convened regular meetings and coordinated youth programming in 2017-2018, though its public activity has since declined.

In recent years, County Supervisors representing Lompoc and Santa Maria have invested discretionary funding in selected grass-roots initiatives that have directly benefited those communities by reducing violence, promoting equity, and fostering resilience. Volunteer-based coalition Collective Cultures Creating Change (C4) received \$150,000 over three years to support gang violence prevention and intervention in Lompoc. Through C4’s

Self-Healing Communities mini-grant program, County resources supported local initiatives focused on youth empowerment, family support, mentoring and peer support, mental wellness, community connection, leadership development, and engagement of at-risk residents. Similarly in Santa Maria, One Community Action (OCA) received \$100,000 over two years to provide a continuum of culturally responsive services to support youth and their families through case management, mentorship, family strengthening, leadership development, and community advocacy. Through OCA, this investment helped address the interconnected academic, social-emotional, family, and community factors affecting youth, while strengthening the protective factors that help them thrive in school and their communities.

These community-driven efforts complement the County's formal coordination structures by strengthening trusted relationships, engaging youth and families, developing community leadership, and building local capacity. The Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council (JJCC), chaired by the Probation Department, serves as the County's multi-agency body for youth safety coordination. The JJCC convenes probation, law enforcement, schools, social services, and behavioral health partners to coordinate gang-prevention strategies and review gang data. Its existing structure and function closely mirror the framework envisioned by the Grand Jury for a North County task force.

Finally, gang prevention and intervention needs vary significantly across the county. Cities such as Santa Maria and Lompoc experience different scales, structures, and concentrations of gang activity, as well as differing existing community programming and needs. As such, the County believes that local city jurisdictions and community organizations are best positioned to design youth-safety strategies tailored to their own needs. The County's role should therefore continue to be supportive through facilitating partnerships and providing resources where needed, rather than creating an additional governmental task force.