

# 10 REASONS TO FIGHT THE NEW JAIL IN SAN MATEO COUNTY

1. The San Mateo County Jail System is Racist. Black people make up 24% of the jail population even though they comprise only 3% of county residents. Similarly, Latinos make up 35% of the jail population, but comprise only 26% of the county residents.
2. San Mateo can't afford a new jail. The jail will cost \$160-200 million to construct (including debt), plus \$30 million a year to operate. The former County Controller called this jail "a budget buster."
3. Crime Rates are Going Down. Crime rates in the county have been dropping steadily for 30 years.
4. The jail is being built on a toxic waste dump. The site for this jail is so environmentally toxic that the Department of Toxic Substances Control issued a covenant forbidding residential use of the land.
5. San Mateo Jails are locking people up before they go to trial. San Mateo County's percentage of pretrial detainees tripled in the last 20 years to 71% of the jail population. A large proportion of this population simply cannot afford bail.
6. Building jails does not solve overcrowding. California has tried to build its way out of an overcrowding crisis for 30 years and failed. Rather, it just spread terrible conditions over more buildings and more lives.
7. The new San Mateo Jail would directly result in social service cuts. The County Manager and the ACLU of Northern California both concluded that jail construction and maintenance will inevitably require cuts in county spending on housing, education, healthcare, and transit infrastructure.
8. Jails are socially toxic. When people go to jail, they can lose their jobs, housing, and even their children. Their families lose desperately needed economic and emotional support. Spending time living in a cage also exacerbates mental and medical health problems that follow people back into the community.
9. 35-40% of the jail population have mental illness. The County's Health System states: "The research evidence is strong that despite the best treatment that can be provided while people are in custody, people with mental illness do not get better in institutions, particularly in jails, which tend to be difficult even for people without mental illness."
10. We have clear alternatives. We could close the deplorable Women's Correctional Center without building a new jail by implementing a pre-trial release program, expanding the county mental health programs, and expanding pre-arrest diversion into programs and services for people who are charged with simple drug possession and low-level drug sales, sex work, or minor property crimes.