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September 22, 2020
Board of State and Community Corrections
2590 Venture Oaks Way, Suite 200
Sacramento, California 95833

Madam Chair and Board Members,

This letter is submitted as public comment outlining Community Solutions, Incorporated's rationale as a proponent of allowing agencies who have previously received Adult Reentry Grant (ARG) Warm Hand Off (WHO) grant funding to be permitted to apply during the next round (Cohort II) of ARG WHO grant funding. We at Community Solutions, Inc. (CSI) understand and appreciate some of the reasoning for limiting eligibility to those who have yet to receive ARG WHO funding. On the surface this strategy portends to support a wider array of service providers and subsequently a more diverse set of services for the targeted population. When considering additional factors, I assert that this stipulation may actually be counterproductive to the objectives of the grant.

The BSCC endeavors to prevent and reduce crime by encouraging the use of evidence-based practices through the fair, prudent and efficient distribution of state and federal grant funds. The RFP Development Proposal in question states that limiting Cohort II to new applicants would allow new community-based organizations an opportunity to apply. The logic in this statement is, in my opinion, flawed. All CBOs had the opportunity to apply for funding in Cohort I, as is fair and prudent. Limiting the pool of applicants for Cohort II potentially limits the BSCC from choosing the most judicious and effective services in relation to the needs of the targeted population.

The BSCC is committed to supporting a focus on better outcomes in the criminal justice system and those involved in it. Applicants that seek funding through this grant process should use research and data-driven decision-making in the development, implementation, and evaluation of their grant-funded projects. In certain areas of California the number of CBOs available to serve the target population with evidence-based and best-practice interventions may be limited. Limiting the applicants could have the undesired effect of no services being provided in these areas or, in some instances, would deny returning citizens the opportunity to benefit from the very best services available in their community. Denying this opportunity does not give returning citizens the best odds for a successful and crime-free



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future. Beyond the impact it could have on the individual, there are negative consequences for the individual's family and the community as public safety can be compromised.

Cohort I took place before anyone could predict what the widespread effects of COVID19 would have on our communities. CBOs who received funding in Cohort I may also be, in some areas, the best suited to meet the particular needs of the target population within the confines and boundaries of a COVID19 society.

Also, there is plenty of room for middle ground options, including but not limited to:

1. Setting aside a reasonable percentage of the funds to be awarded to agencies yet to secure an award.
2. Provide a proposal scoring incentive for those who have yet to receive funding.

Thank you for your time and consideration. CSI supports solutions that promote equity and inclusion, without bias, in a fair and impartial selection process. We are equally committed to our role of creating conditions for change for those individuals and families we serve by ensuring that the services we provide are not only evidence-based, but are also implemented with fidelity. It is our collective responsibility to advocate for those who would receive services under this funding and to use public funds in a way that is responsible and that maximizes the opportunity for success for returning citizens.

It is our request that the Board allow for existing CBOs to be eligible for ARG WHO grant funding in Cohort II.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Heck', written over a horizontal line.

Michael Heck
State Director (CA)
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