

BOC Public Comment on Deflection

September 18, 2024

Good morning Commissioners, for the record, I am Curtis Landers, Lincoln County Sheriff.

I am here to address my concerns and ask questions regarding the County's deflection program under House Bill 4002. A deflection workgroup including Commissioner Miller, and other partners, have been meeting since April to discuss our program.

I want to say I am disappointed that as your elected Sheriff, I have to present my concerns to all three of you via a 3-minute public comment period, and that it was not placed on the agenda, as requested by Commissioner Miller, for an open and transparent discussion.

I am not even sure a decision has been made because I have heard conflicting information from Commissioners and from Legal Counsel. I am not even sure why your Legal Counsel is involved at this point and she has not been part of our discussions. Moreover, I am concerned about the lack of public discussion on this matter by the Commissioners who are making this decision without input from the workgroup, which is critical to making an informed decision.

The deflection workgroup, including Commissioner Miller, recommended placing the coordinator in the District Attorney's office to ensure the program remains focused on deflection, diversion, and support for the participants. It is also essential for the data collection required by the bill and for following the requirements of the bill as it relates to expungements. This recommendation was based on extensive discussions and considerations about how best to support the program's goals.

Placing the coordinator in community corrections would directly contradict this recommendation and risk undermining the program's mission. Despite being informed that no final decision has been made, we still lack a clear and transparent plan from community corrections. This uncertainty makes it difficult to assess how the placement aligns with the program's goals. It's concerning that this matter has not been discussed publicly to gather all necessary information. Open dialogue and public discussion are essential for understanding the implications and making a well-informed decision.

We are under a strict timeline, and delays or missteps could jeopardize the critical grant funding necessary for the deflection program. We need to act swiftly to secure this funding and ensure the program's success. To meet grant requirements and maintain program integrity, the coordinator must be placed in the District Attorney's office, as recommended by the workgroup.

Some questions we have:

Has a decision been finalized for the coordinator position?

What is Community Corrections plan for deflection if it is your decision to place it there?

Who is going to assume the responsibility of finalizing the deflection program grant and how are you going to meet the timelines?

I urge the board to act promptly, honor the workgroup's recommendation, and place the coordinator in the District Attorney's office. You are directly risking lives in our community by your actions. Additionally, I request that the board engage in public discussion to ensure all relevant information is considered before making a final decision or to reconsider any decision that has already been made.

Since I only have 3-minutes, I will be providing further information to the public on this situation because there are several details I did not have time to provide today.

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to a quick and informed decision that supports the success of this vital program to help law enforcement address a very serious situation in our county.