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NACo supports realignment programs to curb prison populations

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The National Association of Counties (NACo) today voiced support for realignment programs, such as the one in California, which aim to transfer low-level, non-violent state prison inmates to county parole programs to help curb state prison populations and break the costly revolving door of offenders cycling in and out of prison.

Speaking at a Congressional briefing today, Matt Cate, executive director, California State Association of Counties, said his state’s public safety realignment represents “a massive public policy shift” affecting the largest criminal justice system in the nation.

“Counties are now managing tens of thousands of offenders at the local level and, while the new responsibilities certainly come with obstacles and challenges, we firmly believe that if properly resourced local governments are in the best position to improve individual and community outcomes,” Cate said. “Housing, supervising and treating offenders at the local level – activities supported by a dedicated funding source – has helped the state comply with a federal court order to reduce the prison population.”

The briefing, “Realignment: California’s Efforts to Reduce the State Prison Population and How Local Governments are Responding,” was sponsored by The Council of State Governments’ Justice Center and NACo. Honorary co-hosts were California Reps. Adam Schiff (Calif.) and Paul Cook.

NACo has long supported programs to decrease jail populations and increase savings while improving public safety, such as pre-trial justice and jail diversion programs.

At the briefing, speakers representing local governments and law enforcement agencies in California explained the objectives of realignment, the steps local governments are taking in response to this law and the challenges with which they are struggling as they take responsibility for people who historically had been sentenced to prison and/or released to parole supervision.

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