



Press Release



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OVER 3,700 SIGNATURES CALLING FOR DEATH ROW INMATE REMOVAL FROM CHINO PRISON SENT TO GOVERNOR GAVIN NEWSOM

Chino Hills, CA – The Cities of Chino and Chino Hills have sent a petition to Governor Gavin Newsom including over 3,700 collected signatures from community members across the Chino Valley demanding the removal of 46 death row inmates recently transferred from San Quentin State Prison to the California Institution for Men (CIM) in Chino, and for the state to invest in the prison.

The signatures are part of a larger packet that was sent to Governor Gavin Newsom and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) on Thursday, June 27. The packet also includes formal letters from multiple elected officials and neighboring cities and agencies who share the same concerns including Congresswoman Norma Torres, Congresswoman Young Kim, Senator Kelly Seyarto, Senator Susan Rubio, Assemblymember Freddie Rodriguez, San Bernardino County Supervisor Curt Hagman, San Bernardino County Sheriff Shannon Dicus, City of Ontario, City of Brea, and the Chino Valley Fire District.

"It is clear from the support shown by our Chino Valley community and echoed in formal letters from our elected officials, partner agencies, and neighboring cities, this is not a local issue but a regional one," said Chino Hills Mayor Cynthia Moran. "Together, we collectively urge Governor Newsom to immediately remove the transferred death row inmates from CIM and to invest in critical infrastructure and security improvements for the deteriorating facility. Our community's safety and trust continue to be at stake, and we remain committed to our call for urgent and decisive action to protect our residents."

"The safety of our Chino Valley community must come first. We stand united with our fellow residents to demand the removal of these dangerous condemned inmates from CIM and call for significant investment into the safety and staffing of this prison," said Chino Mayor Eunice Ulloa. "On behalf of the City and the City Council, thank you to the Chino Valley community

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for standing behind us every step of the way. We invite Governor Newsom to take a tour of CIM and see our concerns for himself.”

The relocation of death row inmates is part of the Condemned Inmate Transfer Program (CITP), an initiative spearheaded by CDCR that empties San Quentin’s Death Row and transfers death row inmates to lower-level facilities, provided they have certain safeguards, such as an electrified fence. The transfer is a direct result of Proposition 66, a voter-approved initiative mandating death row prisoners work prison jobs to pay restitution to victims’ families.

In April 2024, CIM representatives shared with the Community Advisory Council, which includes Council Members from the Cities of Chino and Chino Hills, that they had recently begun receiving transfers of condemned inmates from San Quentin State Prison’s Death Row, after 14 had already arrived between February and April 2024. In total, 46 death row inmates have been transferred out of the former San Quentin State Prison and into CIM, leaving CIM with the fourth-highest number of death row inmates in the state out of the 24 institutions that received transfers. CIM Warden Travis Pennington has since apologized for the lack of communication leading up to the transfers.

On May 7, the Cities of Chino and Chino Hills, alongside representatives of the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department and the San Bernardino County District Attorney’s Office, held a joint press conference calling on the State of California to halt the prisoner transfer and invest in the prison. The cities have not received a direct response from Governor Gavin Newsom or the CDCR.

The alarm and concern expressed by the Cities of Chino and Chino Hills are not unfounded, and CIM’s security failures are well-documented. Death row transfers have opened old wounds in the community regarding the tragic events involving Kevin Cooper, who escaped from CIM in 1983 and brutally murdered members of the Ryen and Hughes families in Chino Hills. There have also been two high-profile escapes from CIM in 2018 and 2003. While CDCR has since shared the condemned inmates will not be housed in the same area where these escapes occurred, the concerns lie in the broader need for substantial investments in security, infrastructure, and staffing at the facility.

To learn more about the prisoner transfer and view the full package sent to Governor Gavin Newsom and the CDCR, visit www.chinohills.org/CIM.

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