

## **Argument For**

### **The Public Safety Bond is an investment in our community.**

Over the last 15 years, Utah's population has grown by nearly one million people. The space in our jail has barely increased. Inmates are being released without access to the resources needed to put them on a path toward self-reliance, leading to a cycle of repeat offenses. A fentanyl-fueled drug crisis has increased substance use, criminal activity, and homelessness on our streets. The State of Utah, municipal partners, and Salt Lake County have committed to a strategic plan to address our mental health, public safety, and homelessness challenges. As a part of this plan, Salt Lake County is taking actions such as expanding the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) Task Force, investing in affordable housing, and advancing the Public Safety Bond.

### **The Public Safety Bond will fund:**

#### **1. Construction of a Justice and Accountability Center:**

The Justice and Accountability Center is a secure alternative to jail for low-level offenders, many of whom are experiencing homelessness, and often have substance use and mental health challenges. Integrated with the criminal justice system, the facility will provide resources to stop the cycle of criminal behavior. This includes caseworkers, job training, mental health and substance use disorder treatment, and connection to housing opportunities.

Our jail has become the primary system to serve people experiencing homelessness. Jail is also the largest mental health and substance use disorder treatment facility in the County. This comes at great expense to taxpayers, costing an average of \$136 a day per inmate. It fails to address the cycle of repeat offenders and related costs. Instead, at \$75 a day, the Justice and Accountability Center will save taxpayers as much as \$6.8 million per year while reducing crime and improving public safety.

#### **2. Expansion and Improvement of the County Jail:**

Not a single jail bed has been added since 2001. The public safety bond increases jail capacity and combines the two county jails into one. It increases and improves access to mental health treatment. It also builds a reentry unit where inmates preparing to exit jail will work with caseworkers to access resources needed to rejoin society on a path towards self-reliance.

Timing is crucial because one of the two jails is nearing the end of its life span and needs to be replaced. It is more cost-effective to combine the jails now than to invest in repairs and build a replacement in ten years.

The Public Safety Bond will make our community safer, reduce homelessness, and improve lives.

**Vote yes on the Public Safety Bond on November 5.**

## **Opposing Argument**

I urge voters to turn down the proposed bond because it does not prioritize increasing jail beds which are desperately needed along with adequate funding of the DA that is required to lock up

criminals that constantly threaten public safety. The revolving door reputation of the County Jail is partially due to the repurposing of the previous jail bond of \$9.4 million a year to general funds instead of focusing on more jail beds and funding to fully prosecute constant criminal activity. Adequate staffing of the Jail and Sheriff's office is also not prioritized. Police are unable to book drug dealers due to jail restrictions (they are usually released immediately).

Allowing the County to plan and build homeless shelters without proper and respectful citizen and neighborhood agreement has resulted in shelter neighborhoods bearing the brunt of constant criminal activity. The Legislative audit found the homeless shelters to be plagued by drug use and criminal activity near the shelters. This bond does not protect citizens from the County unilaterally placing shelters or Justice Centers in their neighborhoods without neighborhood approval.

The bond should not be passed since it does not prioritize public safety. A respectful public safety bond would increase available jail beds along with adequate staffing and prosecution funding to ensure that constant criminal behavior results in incarceration. Creating more jail beds and filling them with career criminals should happen before more homeless shelters or Justice Centers are built. This bond may also decrease the available jail beds temporarily while a bigger jail is constructed.

We need more jail beds, prosecutors, jail staff and police more than more homeless shelters. This bond may also result in more tax increases for operations and maintenance. Please vote against this bond.

George Chapman Salt Lake City, Utah

### **Rebuttal**

The Public Safety Bond is an investment in public safety by breaking the cycle of crime. It is a balanced approach to reduce crime, hold people accountable, and enhance public safety while saving taxpayer dollars.

Mr. Chapman is correct about Salt Lake County needing more jail beds. Not a single new jail bed has been added in Salt Lake County since 2001. The Public Safety Bond provides 812 newly constructed jail beds, including new mental health beds and a new unit to put inmates on a path toward self-reliance. Adequate staffing is always a priority for Salt Lake County. A key part of the Sheriff's job is to ensure the jail operates safely and efficiently.

An additional aspect of the Public Safety Bond—the Justice and Accountability Center—is a supervised and secure alternative for low-level offenders. It connects them to mental health services, substance use treatment, job training, and housing opportunities. With services, offenders are less likely to re-offend because they face a healthier, productive future.

The Public Safety Bond is an efficient use of taxpayer dollars. Housing an inmate at the County Jail costs \$136 a day. The Justice and Accountability Center costs an estimated \$75 per day.

Like Mr. Chapman, Salt Lake County wants to end the revolving door in and out of the corrections system. Jails and emergency rooms should not be the default destination for low-level offenders with underlying issues. This bond reduces the number of offenders on the streets, increases neighborhood safety, and protects our businesses.