

ERIN HANNIGAN

District 1, (707) 553-5363

MONICA BROWN

District 2, Vice-Chair, (707) 784-3031

WANDA WILLIAMS

District 3, Chair Pro-Tem (707) 784-6136

JOHN M. VASQUEZ

District 4, Chair, (707) 784-6129

MITCH MASHBURN

District 5, (707) 784-6030

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**SOLANO
COUNTY****BILL EMLIN**County Administrator
(707) 784-6100675 Texas Street, Suite 6500
Fairfield, CA 94533-6342
Fax (707) 784-6665www.solanocounty.com

October 2, 2023

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
1021 O St., Ste. 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814**RE: REQUEST FOR VETO, AB 701 (Villapudua) Controlled substances: fentanyl**

Dear Governor Newsom,

On behalf of the Solano County Board of Supervisors, I write to respectfully request you veto AB 701, which would apply the existing weight enhancements that increase the penalty and fine for trafficking substances containing heroin, cocaine base, and cocaine to fentanyl. AB 701 would also require a defendant who violates those laws with respect to a substance containing heroin, fentanyl, or cocaine, as specified, to know of the substance's nature or character as a controlled substance to be subjected to an additional term and authorized fine.

Relying on increasing penalties for drug offenses has been extensively researched, and we can therefore make some educated predictions about the outcome of bills like AB 701, including that it would not reduce the distribution of fentanyl or prevent overdoses. Additionally, we predict the bill would not reduce the supply of drugs or the demand for them; and worse, could discourage effective methods of dealing with the opioid crisis.

The unintended consequences of using jails and prisons to deal with a public health issue will take decades to unravel. Criminalizing people who sell and use drugs amplifies the risk of fatal overdoses and diseases, increases stigma and marginalization, and drives people away from needed treatment, health, and harm reduction services.

Another concern is County jails are not equipped to handle an influx this bill would likely produce. Further, passage of AB 701 would also go against other state proposals designed at helping close prisons that are no longer needed as the amount of unused beds in prisons continue to rise. California voters have signaled, again and again, their preference for using a health approach to drug offenses. It is for these reasons and more that Solano County must respectfully oppose AB 701 and respectfully request you veto this measure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John M. Vasquez".

John M. Vasquez, Chair
Solano County Board of Supervisors**CC:**The Honorable Carlos Villapudua, Assemblymember
The Honorable Bill Dodd, Senator
The Honorable Lori D. Wilson, Assemblymember

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The Honorable Solano County Board of Supervisors
Karen Lange, SYASL Partners