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Berkeley City Council Passes Resolution to End Death Sentences in Alameda County

Berkeley – The Berkeley City Council adopted a resolution last night that calls on the District Attorney of Alameda County to stop pursuing the death penalty and to focus instead on investing public resources in solving homicides, preventing violence, and expanding public safety programs.

Alameda County has historically been one of the most aggressive death sentencing counties in California, sending more people to death row than any Bay Area county, even after adjusting for murder rates and population size.

“Sentencing people to execution costs far more than condemning them to permanent imprisonment,” said Delane Sims, who works as an outreach coordinator for the Alameda County Coalition for Alternatives to the Death Penalty (ACCADP). “Relying on the death penalty strains our county’s resources and compromises our ability to pursue effective public safety programs – which is especially important in Alameda County.”

A trial seeking execution in California costs at least \$1.1 million *more* than a trial seeking permanent imprisonment, called “life without parole.”

The resolution was brought by the Alameda County Coalition for Alternatives to the Death Penalty, a coalition of Northern California human rights organizations whose members include Amnesty International, the Bay Association of the United Church of Christ, Progressive Jewish Alliance, eight local chapters of the League of Women Voters, the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, the American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California, Death Penalty Focus, Kehilla Community Synagogue and the Wellstone Democratic Renewal Club.

In 2006, two out of three murders in Alameda County went unsolved.

“As residents of Alameda County, we all know that we desperately need more resources for more effective violence prevention and intervention,” added Sims. Like Sims, a number of activists involved with ACCADP have lost a loved one to murder, and oppose the death penalty on both moral and practical grounds.

The Alameda County Coalition for Alternatives to the Death Penalty (ACCADP) comprises a broad spectrum of community leaders and organizations working together to increase public safety by promoting effective alternatives to the death penalty.