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Subject: SDFJC

Some of you may know, I am resigning from the San Diego Police Department at the end of this week. For the past six years I have worked in the Domestic Violence Unit and the Child Abuse Unit. I took my work here seriously. I volunteered to be an expert in non-fatal strangulation and domestic violence dynamics. I have spent hours in court and on the stand in an effort to help put DV offenders in jail. I have been a contact point for many of you outside of the police department and I was happy to help. I have never had any desire to leave family protection because I thought the work here was so important. It is because of my work and experience that that I hope my voice is heard and my opinion is valued.

When I first arrived at the Family Justice Center in 2014, this place was busy. The San Diego Police Department worked seamlessly with the services that were available here. At that time, there was an endless stream of people in and out of the FJC. We had advocates, military liaison, counseling, Dress for Success, The City Attorney's Office, the District Attorney's Office, Child Welfare Services, Rady's Children's Hospital and the list went on. Over time we added Palomar Healthcare and the DAFEs to the

list of services that were available here. San Diego was truly a model for the country at how to best serve victims of intimate partner violence.

Things began to change in 2018 when the City Attorney's Office took control of the FJC. There was infighting amongst the service providers. Intake personnel on the Family Justice Center side would often times not tell detectives when their victims would arrive. Intake staff would cite confidentiality as the reason, not taking into account that we (the SDPD Detectives) were the reason the victims were here in the first place. It felt that there was an adversarial relationship between the FJC staff and the PD, negating any feelings of teamwork that the original model thrived on. Intake personal even went as far as to convince victims not to cooperate with SDPD. SDPD wasn't the only community partner not happy with the changes. As a result of this lack of cooperation, several community partners left the FJC. CCS, Rady's Children's Hospital, Military Services, TRO Clinic and Dress for Success no longer have operations on site. There are so few service providers here that the San Diego FJC doesn't even meet the definition of an FJC.

As conditions worsened at the FJC, COVID hit in March of 2020. Since March of 2020, the only community partners that have remained on site, and dedicated to their work here, have been the San Diego Police Department, Palomar Health Services and Child Welfare Services. Everyone else has disappeared. Seven months into the Pandemic, we have knowledge about the virus and how to continue operations and remain safe. Additionally, medical professionals know much more about treating COVID and the risk of a serious illness has decreased. Yet the Family Justice Center has made no strides in reopening the door. I walked the halls of the FJC recently, every light was out, every room was empty and every phone lit up red with an unheard voicemail. The FJC is so pathetic they don't even forward calls to intake personal. Women in crisis need to leave a voicemail and wait for a call back. Imagine you are a victim of domestic violence, you finally get away to call the FJC for help and you get an answering machine.

Why has every private business figured out a way to open back up? People are at gyms, restaurants, barber shops and hotels. A modified life has resumed but the FJC has not. Is it an irrational fear of the virus? Or is it because the employees here are able to do the minimum, collect a pay check and stay at home? If a cashier at the grocery store or a barber at a barbershop can take reasonable precautions to remain safe, why is this impossible at the FJC? If SDPD and Palomar personal can show up every day, why can't the same happen at the FJC? How do you justify spending millions of dollars on a place that is completely shut down? I have done my research and FJC's in other parts of the country are open. What is your excuse? The services at the FJC are essential and would not have any problems reopening under California and San Diego County guidelines.

The downfall of the FJC did not begin at COVID but it was exacerbated by the virus. San Diego City Attorney's office should be ashamed at the lack of vision and effort in resuming services here. You should also be ashamed at how you allowed the FJC to fall apart before COVID. Victims of DV need the FJC now more than ever. This work is essential, not the kind of work that can be done from home. Additionally, without community partnership and a functional FJC, San Diego has returned to the dark ages of Domestic Violence. FJC's around the country are running circles around our stagnant FJC that was once the model.

Since the inception of the FJC it was my impression the goal is to help victims and break the cycle of violence. It seems, in the endless excuses and inefficiencies of a city run entity, paired with the egos of some decision makers, this vision has been lost. Say what you want about how the police department

ran the FJC, at least it fostered an environment of teamwork that was based around the victim's best interest. If there is one thing that police officers know how to do, it is to solve problems in an efficient, common sense manner.

I would suggest some solutions to improve the current operations: 1) Figure out how to get back to the center to help victims during this pandemic (there are several other businesses I mentioned that are back to work and have figured it out) 2) at the very least, forward phone calls to an advocate in case a victim in crisis needs help 3) bring back steadfast community partners on site and trust these partners to do their job 4) If a victim is invited to the center by the PD, respect the victim and the PD's time by working with the PD, instead of running interference and creating a division 5) If the current administration can't solve problems, consider different leadership such as the DA's office.

Get your stuff together, figure it out, work with community partners to be a beacon of hope. Your status quo of technicalities and red tape are something only a government agency could invent. Get the job done.

Thank you for taking the time to read this email. My intention is to bring awareness to the issues and spark change,

Sincerely,

Joe Bianco