

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

San Bernardino County Jail Prisoners Sue Over Jail Conditions

Contacts: Kelly Knapp, Prison Law Office, (510) 280-2621
Lt. Brad Toms, Sheriff's Department Public Affairs Division, 909-387-3700

San Bernardino, California (Feb. 29, 2016) - Two prisoners in the San Bernardino County jails filed a federal class action lawsuit today, claiming that conditions in the jails are unconstitutional. They claim that the jails are depriving them of basic medical and mental health care, protection from harm, and the denial of reasonable accommodations for their disabilities. The prisoners seek an order from the court requiring county officials to improve jail conditions to comply with constitutional standards. A copy of the complaint is available at: www.prisonlaw.com.

The complaint alleges that prisoners do not have timely access to physicians and mental health clinicians, that they are victims of excessive force and violence from other inmates, and that they do not receive reasonable accommodations for their disabilities. "These people are entirely dependent on the jail for their health care and well-being – they have no other options," said Kelly Knapp, Staff Attorney at the Prison Law Office.

The lawsuits stem from a lengthy investigation undertaken by the Prison Law Office into conditions in the jails. "Sherriff John McMahan has been transparent about the conditions in the jails and has cooperated fully with the investigation," said Donald Specter, Executive Director of the Prison Law Office. "We expect this cooperation to continue during the litigation and hope that the case can be resolved as quickly as possible," said Specter.

The county denies that conditions in the jails are unlawful and believes that health care provided to inmates is of high quality, that inmates with disabilities are accommodated and that prisoners are housed in a safe and secure environment. Even so, Sheriff McMahan noted that, "Since realignment, counties, including San Bernardino, have faced significant challenges in housing more inmates for longer periods of time than they have historically." The county has devoted significant resources over the last several years to ensuring that conditions in the jails meet all relevant constitutional, statutory and regulatory standards. As part of that ongoing effort, the county has been working cooperatively with the Prison Law Office for more than a year in an effort to address the claims that have been made in the lawsuit. "We have appreciated the willingness of the Prison Law Office to work constructively with the county on these issues, look forward to continued cooperative discussions, and are optimistic that the case can be resolved amicably" said Sheriff McMahan.

