

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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<https://oversight.house.gov>

May 26, 2026

The Honorable Gavin Newsom  
Governor  
State of California  
1021 O Street, Suite 9000  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom:

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is conducting oversight of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's (CDCR) prisoner digital tablet program and the administration of federal grant funds by the California Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC). According to reports, this program distributed tablet computers to nearly all California prisoners by mid-2023.<sup>1</sup> Recent reporting indicates that California's prison inmates are exploiting these state-issued tablets to access and distribute pornographic content.<sup>2</sup> Even worse, reports indicate that some inmates have used these tablets to sexually exploit women and minors from their prison cells.<sup>3</sup> These shocking revelations about prisoner tablet use call into question the federal funds and grants given to California for the specific purpose of reducing crime and rehabilitating criminals, just as California's prisoner tablet program reportedly achieves the exact opposite purpose. The Committee requests documents and communications to inform its oversight of federal funds given to California through the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Affairs.

While the prisoner tablet program seems to have been funded primarily through CDCR California state funds,<sup>4</sup> the federal government nonetheless sends millions of federal tax dollars to California via grants, the intent of which is criminal rehabilitation, crime prevention, or state and local law enforcement or court support.<sup>5</sup> Since 2021, BSCC has received nearly \$70 million in grants from the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grants Program.<sup>6</sup> In the same period, California organizations, institutions, and

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<sup>1</sup> Kate Wolffe, *Almost all people incarcerated in California now have free tablets*, JPR (July 20, 2023), available at <https://www.ijpr.org/law-and-justice/2023-07-20/almost-all-people-incarcerated-in-california-now-have-free-tablets>.

<sup>2</sup> Christopher Rufo & Haley Strack, *Watching Porn on California's Death Row*, CITY JOURNAL (May 13, 2026) [hereinafter "City Journal Tablets"]

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> See *SB 551*, CALMATTERS DIGITAL DEMOCRACY, available at [https://calmatters.digitaldemocracy.org/bills/ca\\_202520260sb551](https://calmatters.digitaldemocracy.org/bills/ca_202520260sb551).

<sup>5</sup> See Nathan James, CONG. RESEARCH SERV., R48898, DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE GRANTS (Mar. 27, 2026).

<sup>6</sup> *OJP Awards Since FY2021 By NOFO As of 5/13/2026*, U.S. DEP'T OF JUSTICE, available at <https://charts.ojp.usdoj.gov/t/public/views/OJPAwardsDashboardallFiscalYears/AwardsByNOFO?%3Aembed=y&%>

municipal governments have received around \$16.5 million in federal BJA Second Chance Act awards,<sup>7</sup> and the House is currently considering a five-year reauthorization of the Second Chance Act's grant programs under the U.S. Department of Justice.<sup>8</sup> In 2023, the U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) approved \$410 million in funding to support California's justice-involved reentry and rehabilitation infrastructure through the California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal program's Justice-Involved Reentry Initiative.<sup>9</sup> Congress did not authorize the Byrne JAG program, the Second Chance Act, or any other federal criminal justice grant so California could also build an environment for convicted felons to use state-issued, taxpayer-funded devices to sexually exploit children or view pornography.

The Committee is concerned that California's programs may be using taxpayer funds to perpetuate sexual violence. The most apparent example is that of Nathaniel Diaz, convicted in 2023 of sexual crimes against a 12-year-old girl, who, with his state-issued prison tablet, began sexually messaging and exploiting the same underage girl.<sup>10</sup> Diaz's indictment also reveals the exceptionally weak safeguards on California's prisoner tablet program, as in addition to having two accomplices receive and send sexually explicit images of the victim to him, Diaz was somehow able to call the victim thousands of times.<sup>11</sup>

Yet, on May 13, 2026, on your X account, you dismissed claims of inmate abuse of the prison tablet program, claiming that inmate use is "monitored, recorded, searchable, and investigated." You went even further to claim that "these tablets [are] used for education, rehabilitation, family communication, and reentry support proven to reduce crime."<sup>12</sup> CDCR officials claimed that the tablets were provided to give inmates "access to the Bible, education, and reentry resource that actually reduce crime."<sup>13</sup> Data from the California legislature projects a total California state prison population of 90,000 adults this year.<sup>14</sup> This prison population stands in contrast to the 60,000 employees of CDCR, who, in addition to monitoring the daily lives of prisoners as part of their jobs, are responsible for monitoring prisoners' tablet use. Put simply by former Deputy Director of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Division of Adult Parole Operations Douglas Eckenrod, it is not viable for the prison to monitor 90,000

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3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y. See award numbers 15PBJA-23-GG-01500-RSAT, 15PBJA-23-GG-02967-JAGX, 15PBJA-24-GG-01117-RSAT, 15PBJA-24-GG-04314-JAGX.

<sup>7</sup> *Id.* See award numbers ending in "SCAX."

<sup>8</sup> See *H.R.3552 - Second Chance Reauthorization Act of 2025*, CONGRESS, available at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/3552/text>.

<sup>9</sup> DHCS Stakeholder News, CALIF. DPT. OF HEALTH CARE SERVS. (January 27, 2023), available at <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/formsandpubs/publications/oc/Pages/DHCSStakeholderNews/012723StakeholderUpdate.aspx>.

<sup>10</sup> Julia Marnin, *Inmate makes thousands of calls to girl he's convicted of abusing in CA, feds say*, SACRAMENTO BEE (Apr. 22, 2025), available at <https://www.sacbee.com/news/california/article304762946.html>.

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> Governor Newsom Press Office (@GovPressOffice), X, (May 13, 2026, 6:53 PM), available at <https://x.com/GovPressOffice/status/2054696551411232887>.

<sup>13</sup> City Journal Tablets, *supra* note 2.

<sup>14</sup> *How many adults are in California's state and county correctional systems and how has this changed over time?*, CAL. LEGISLATIVE ANALYST'S OFFICE, available at [https://www.lao.ca.gov/PolicyAreas/CJ/5\\_cj\\_inmates](https://www.lao.ca.gov/PolicyAreas/CJ/5_cj_inmates).

inmates and their tablet usage.<sup>15</sup> Former Director Eckenrod added that “I would bet my pension that there’s a vast amount of childhood pornography on the tablets.”<sup>16</sup>

It is highly concerning, though not surprising, that convicted criminals found various ways around the safety controls on the tablet program, engaged in criminal behavior via the tablets, and consumed, sent, and received child sexual abuse material.<sup>17</sup> To inform the Committee’s oversight of federal criminal rehabilitation funding, the Committee requests the following documents and communications, covering the time period January 1, 2017, to present, as soon as possible but no later than June 9, 2026:

1. All documents and communications among or between the CDCR, BSCC and any inmate tablet vendors regarding pornographic, criminal, or otherwise malicious use of state-issued tablets by inmates;
2. Documentation sufficient to show whether any federal funds were spent on the inmate tablet program, including a detailed list of fund recipients and subrecipients for all grants awarded to California via the Department of Justice, and all related itemized expenditure reports submitted to federal agencies;
3. Documentation and communications sufficient to show that all inmate tablet activity is, as you claim, “monitored, recorded, searchable, and investigated”<sup>18</sup> to ensure no misuse, including all monitoring reports, site visit records, and desk reviews conducted by CDCR, BSCC, or federal officials on subgrantees or grantees, and any corrective action plans issued to grantees or subgrantees;
4. All documents and communications between the Office of the Governor of California and CDCR or BSCC regarding prisoner tablet misuses or criminal activity; and
5. All documents and communications regarding the restrictions on inmate usage of the tablet program.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X. To arrange for delivery of responsive documents or to ask any related follow-up questions, please contact the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Majority staff at (202) 225-5074. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

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<sup>15</sup> City Journal Tablets, *supra* note 2.

<sup>16</sup> *Id.*

<sup>17</sup> See generally City Journal Tablets, *supra* note 2.

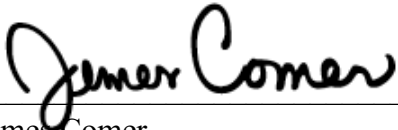
<sup>18</sup> Governor Newsom Press Office (@GovPressOffice), X, (May 13, 2026, 6:53 PM), available at <https://x.com/GovPressOffice/status/2054696551411232887>.

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Sincerely,



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James Comer

Chairman

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

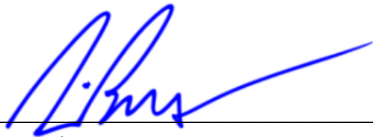


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Brandon Gill

Chairman

Task Force on Defending  
Constitutional Rights and  
Exposing Institutional Abuses



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Tim Burchett

Chairman

Subcommittee on Delivering on Government Efficiency

cc: The Honorable Robert Garcia, Ranking Member  
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

The Honorable Melanie Stansbury, Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Delivering on Government Efficiency