

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HOLLY J. MITCHELL AND
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PREPARING FOR THE CLOSURE OF THE DIVISION OF JUVENILE JUSTICE

Over the past decade, Los Angeles County (County), and many other counties across California, have attempted to reform what has become a punitive juvenile justice system. It is now understood that the rehabilitative needs of youth are fundamentally different from the needs of adults and that the punitive approach used for justice-involved adults not only results in worsened outcomes, it also fails to make communities safer. Accordingly, the County needs to prioritize transforming its youth justice system into a system centered on healing and growth.

County and community efforts have led to significant improvements such as the reduction of incarcerated youth, fewer low-risk youth on probation, greater investment in youth diversion, and the closure of several of the County’s juvenile halls and camps. However, achieving meaningful reform in the way justice-involved youth are treated has remained elusive at the County as well as at the State. Poor conditions of confinement, inaccessibility to community and family supports, and a culture that has bred violence and fear have all played a part in bringing us to this historic moment for juvenile justice in California. Recognizing the longstanding problems associated with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation’s Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), on May 14, 2020, Governor Newsom released a revised budget announcing intentions to close the DJJ, the State division in charge of youth custody. Understanding that the County could soon become responsible for the care and supervision of hundreds of additional

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youth, the Board of Supervisors directed the Youth Justice Work Group (YJWG) to develop a plan for transitioning youth in DJJ custody to the County. On September 30, 2020, Governor Newsom signed SB 823 into law, tasking the Juvenile Justice Coordinating Committee (JJCC) with developing a plan for closing the DJJ by transferring the responsibility for the custody, treatment and supervision of DJJ youth to the counties. On December 21, 2020, the YJWG submitted 10 recommendations for preparing the County for the closure of DJJ (Recommendations), as it will soon begin integrating this population into local facilities.

While these Recommendations provide a roadmap for transitioning the County away from a punitive youth justice system and elevating a care-first approach, implementing the Recommendations will require extensive planning and cooperation among members of the JJCC subcommittee tasked with developing the plan, as well as input from County departments, community members and other stakeholders. The County must work carefully and proactively in making timely preparations for the closure of DJJ, which is slated for June 30, 2021.

WE THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Instruct the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) Subcommittee (Subcommittee) of the Juvenile Justice Coordinating Committee, whose membership is established by state legislation, to consult with local justice, health, community and other relevant stakeholders, to report back in writing in 120 days with:
 - a. Recommendations that consider and incorporate, where appropriate, the Youth Justice Work Group's recommendations, including those from the report entitled, "Youth Justice Reimagined: Recommendations of the Youth Justice Work Group DJJ Transition Team"; and
 - b. Submit its final DJJ plan (Plan) for approval by the Board of Supervisors (Board) prior to submitting the Plan to the State and institute a standing report back to the Board on an annual basis to update the Plan as needed; and

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2. Instruct the Subcommittee to report back in writing in 20 days with a description of the support needed to complete this task, with consideration for, among other things, participation of designees with relevant expertise from the Chief Executive Office, County Counsel, and other County departments, as well as any logistical or administrative support needed to fulfill the above directives.

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(JB/CAS/DBV)