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Jails Last: Addressing the Overcrowding Concerns in the Inmate Reception Center

The number of people being processed in LA County’s (County) Inmate Reception Center (IRC) is increasing to concerning levels that are resulting in people being held at IRC, a temporary holding area, well over the mandated 20 hours. This is particularly affecting people with mental health needs who are, depending on their severity, waist-chained to a bench, wearing nothing but a suicide vest.

Some of the delays can be attributed to the shortage of correctional health staff who perform medical and mental health assessments and evaluations of the individuals being processed. Every individual undergoes this assessment prior to being incarcerated in a more permanent housing area. Additionally, at the end of the month, the Emergency Bail Schedule (EBS) will no longer be in effect, which risks the number of people entering the County jails increasing to pre-pandemic levels.

The County’s Jail Closure Implementation Team (JCIT) was provided AB 109

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funding from the Board of Supervisors to address the issues of overcrowding at IRC and the associated sanitary issues due to COVID-19. Additionally, the Alternatives to Incarceration Initiative (ATI) has created strategic initiatives to lower the pre-trial population and has implemented true diversion programs like Rapid Diversion and Pre-Plea Diversion. To achieve jail closure, reducing and stemming the inflow into the jails is vital. ATI is also leading the County's pre-trial efforts as it is evident that holding people who are unable to pay bail is not only unfair, but an irresponsible use of resources.

IRC is the tip of the iceberg to the larger complexities associated with the criminalization of poverty, mental illness, and substance use dependencies. A plan to address IRC needs to be inclusive of "care first" priorities and the comprehensive transformation of the systems that contribute to mass incarceration and homelessness.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Direct the Jail Closure Implementation Team (JCIT) and the Alternatives to Incarceration Initiative (ATI), in collaboration with the LA Sheriff's Department, Correctional Health Services, Department of Public Health, and other relevant County departments to report back, in writing, in 21 days, on a plan with a funding proposal, leveraging JCIT's allocated AB 109 monies to address the overcrowding in the Inmate Reception Center.

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