

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HILDA L. SOLIS  
AND JANICE HAHN

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**Adopting a “Care First, Jail Last” Approach to the County’s Public Safety and  
Justice Reform Efforts**

Over the last several years, there has been a growing national, state, and local conversation acknowledging that the criminal justice system has been tasked with responding to some of our society’s greatest health and social service needs, which it was not designed to serve. To reverse the trends of mass incarceration and the pervasive racial disparities in the criminal justice system, and respond to the growing drug overdose epidemic, criminal justice system stakeholders are increasingly adopting public health “harm reduction” strategies, such as reducing law enforcement contact, increasing diversion, and using tools such as medication assisted treatment, and overdose prevention, rather than relying on traditional criminal justice responses.

In this vein, Los Angeles County has already undertaken considerable programmatic, research, and capital project efforts to address the issue of mass incarceration and address the striking equity issues of disproportionate representation of

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SOLIS \_\_\_\_\_

RIDLEY-THOMAS \_\_\_\_\_

KUEHL \_\_\_\_\_

HAHN \_\_\_\_\_

BARGER \_\_\_\_\_

poor people and people of color. And on February 12, 2019, our Board created a workgroup called the “Alternatives to Incarceration” workgroup (ATI), which was a true collaboration between County entities and community stakeholders to create a comprehensive blueprint for guidance on how to improve the health of our County residents and communities, improve public safety, and improve the effectiveness of our justice system by reducing the reliance on the County’s jails. In response, the ATI has created a bold, unique, and ground-breaking vision for transforming Los Angeles County’s approach to public safety and community wellness, that will inspire action locally and serve as a model for regional collaboration, nationally. The ATI Report, entitled, “Care First, Jails Last: Health and Racial Justice Strategies for Safer Communities,” (Report) provides an aspirational, actionable, and strategic vision for making Los Angeles County healthier, economically stronger, more equitable, and even safer than it already is.

The Report organizes 114 recommendations under 5 overarching strategies that serve as the defining principles to implement the County’s bold new approach to using a racial equity model to build up a public health, harm reduction structure to improve safety and success for all of our communities. The Report highlights that the steps that the County has already undertaken are significant. And that most of what is ahead is determining how to increase and expand existing programs. It underscores that the volume of services needed to change the way we serve the mental health care, substance use disorder treatment, workforce development, housing, and education needs for many of the people who otherwise become involved with the criminal justice system, are extensive. And, it identifies novel areas of exploration, that will allow for the County to explore new horizons in transforming its approach to justice and health.

The motion, Building a System of Alternatives to Incarceration proposes taking the first steps to begin down the path of implementing the bold vision set out by this Report. (Supervisors Sheila Kuehl and Mark Ridley-Thomas, March 10, 2020). Additionally, a wide variety of County agencies are currently assessing of the numbers of people who could potentially be diverted based on addiction or medical care needs in a system of care, and the capacity needed to serve them. And some areas of needed study remain, such as the number of people who could reasonably be expected to be released through properly implemented and bold pretrial reform mechanisms, and the impact of state criminal justice reforms. Thus, as we embark on the path towards building this new vision, is worth acknowledging that this next phase requires our County to rethink its way of doing business, including engaging agencies and aspects of our work that we may not have previously thought of as being part of the justice reform efforts in this County.

The Board has established Board Directed Priorities to bring additional attention, innovation, funding, coordination, and oversight to matters of particular importance and complexity, that require broad and collective response. Because of its comprehensive, ambitious, and cross-sector scope, the Alternative to Incarceration Report should be the foundation for reshaping the Board Directed Priority of “Justice Reform.”

As the current “Justice Reform” Board Directed Priority shows, the County has been taking steps towards important justice reforms for the past several years. It reads, “The Board of Supervisors is committed to broadly reforming the County’s criminal justice system, with a goal of reducing recidivism and enhancing the safety of our neighborhoods. The board’s evidence-based approaches are designed to, among other things, provide alternatives to incarceration, better address the needs

of justice-involved youth and give communities a stronger voice in the affairs of the County’s law enforcement agencies.”

The County is now ready to take a more comprehensive, and transformative approach to reducing involvement with the County’s justice system, including incarceration, and increasing holistic, community-based, harm reduction supports to prevent justice involvement, while working collaboratively with community to reduce and eliminate longstanding and profound racial disparities in our justice system, to fully realize the Board’s “care first, jail last” mission.

**WE, THEREFORE, MOVE** that the Board of Supervisors of the County of Los Angeles (Board)

1. Direct the Chief Executive Office to report back in writing, in 30 days with recommendations of how to amend the “Justice Reform” Board Directed Priority to reflect the County’s strong commitment to implementing the “Care First, Jail Last” vision, as envisioned by the Alternative to Incarceration Work Group report, with particular emphasis on integrating the five overarching strategies that support over 100 recommendations, incorporating a racial and gender equity lens, and continued collaboration with and integration of community stakeholders, including those who have lived experience such as the Collaborative of Impacted People. The “Justice Reform” Board Directed Priority should maintain law enforcement oversight as a component.

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AGN. NO.