

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HILDA L. SOLIS
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March 31, 2020

Ensuring Adequate Efforts to Prevent COVID-19 Among Justice-Involved Populations

People who are incarcerated are highly vulnerable to the spread of contagious illnesses, especially one such as COVID-19, because they are often in crowded quarters with large numbers of people, have limited control over their movement and exposure, and therefore have limited ability to employ strategies like social distancing. Furthermore, people who are incarcerated often have reduced access to basic hygiene practices, despite these factors and the sanitation challenges often found in detention facilities. Moreover, a significant number of incarcerated individuals have compromised immune systems or otherwise are considered vulnerable to this virus (e.g., the elderly and pregnant women). Reducing the risk of spreading of the virus within Los Angeles County’s (County) jail system, as well as in the juvenile halls and camps, is critical for those who are in the County’s care as well as for the personnel who work in those facilities. Protective measures will reduce possible increased exposure to the community, upon a person’s release or from staff returning home after a shift.

The County’s justice partners have already taken impressive and important steps to address this issue through unprecedented creativity and collaboration. The Public Defender convened the County justice partners to begin communicating and collaborating to address the overlapping public safety and public health concerns of its clients. Correctional Health has released protocols around testing and treatment. As of mid-

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March, the Sheriff's Department had lowered the jail population by over 600 by taking common sense approaches to provide early release for those in custody for non-violent offenses, and continues to explore opportunities to reduce the population further while caring for those who remain incarcerated. Law enforcement agencies have dramatically reduced unnecessary arrests to curb the flow of people into the jails. And while there are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in either the jails or juvenile halls or probation camps at this time, there are efforts to both test and quarantine individuals who are symptomatic or may be at risk.

While we commend County departments and the courts for taking this issue seriously and continuing to work to address these issues, we also know that more is needed, and urgently, to protect those in the County's custody, particularly vulnerable populations, as well as thousands of County employees.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS request the Sheriff's Department, the Department of Health Services and the Probation Department, with the assistance of the Office of Inspector General, the Department of Public Health, the Department of Mental Health, the Office of Diversion and Reentry, the Public Defender's office, the Alternative Public Defenders office, the District Attorney's office, County Counsel, Chief Executive Office, Homeless Initiative, Department of Public Social Services, Internal Services Division (ISD), the courts, and any other relevant stakeholders, to update the Board of Supervisors consistently and frequently, on the following:

- 1) Plans and/or efforts underway to increase the safe release of, or care for, those who are currently incarcerated who may be particularly vulnerable to COVID-19, based on age, or existing medical conditions, as well as those who are pretrial, are approaching their scheduled release date, or may otherwise qualify for safe and early release, with a goal to reduce overcrowding and safely lower the jail and juvenile hall and probation camp populations, without compromising community safety, in order to prevent the spread of the virus, with updates on how many people are being impacted;
- 2) Updates on efforts to further reduce the introduction of new individuals into the jail and juvenile facilities while balancing public safety and risk to the physical

safety of the community;

- 3) Updates on efforts to provide resources to support those who are released from the jails, juvenile halls or camps to avoid becoming homeless upon release;
- 4) Plans to ensure adequate space for quarantining or isolating individuals currently in custody who may become infected or who are vulnerable and cannot be released, and thus require extra protections to ensure their well-being;
- 5) Updates on efforts to provide increased and sufficient handwashing, hygiene, and cleaning supplies, and policies to support best practices in personal and institutional hygiene (such as handwashing and cleaning), including providing sufficient information and education on proper hygiene measures and effective strategies to reduce infection to all individuals within our care within detention facilities, and staff and personnel who work in those facilities. This should also include efforts to control rumors and reduce unnecessary fear among prisoners and staff as much as possible;
- 6) Updates on efforts to ensure effective screening of all new admissions, along with plans to ensure staff entering the facilities are healthy (e.g. taking temperatures), and plans to ensure appropriate staffing levels and treatment should individuals become infected, and adequate data collection and tracking based on public health approaches;
- 7) A plan to support increased virtual contact and visitation with people in custody at no cost, as well as communication with families regarding when visitation will resume – once determined – in order to minimize anxiety and increase communication and familial connections.

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