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**Expanding and Improving Coordination of Los Angeles County’s Service Delivery
to Justice-Involved Veterans**

Los Angeles County (County) stands at a unique intersection of opportunities and challenges, especially when it comes to serving our Veteran community. Home to nearly 250,000 Veterans, the County serves as both a haven and a microcosm of the systemic issues facing this demographic nationally. A troubling indicator lies in the data that Veterans, those who have self-identified, make up approximately 2% of the County’s jail population and have significant involvement in our legal system. This aligns with a larger national concern where Veterans, comprising 7% of the U.S. adult population, constitute about 8% of those incarcerated across the nation.

These statistics come to life against a broader tapestry of issues: medical, mental health, and substance use disorder treatment needs that are often intensified by the cycle of incarceration and homelessness. About 30% of Veterans who are incarcerated have experienced homelessness, and many face psychosocial issues that

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compound their struggles with the justice system. Such data sets are not mere numbers; they represent human beings and should be our call to action.

Within the justice-involved Veteran population, it is estimated nationally that 10% of incarcerated Veterans are not eligible for Veterans Health Administration (VHA) services due to dishonorable/bad conduct or other discharge records from military service, and an additional 13% may not be eligible due to other than honorable discharge status. These Veterans may face the same challenges to finding healthcare as other justice-involved populations, including lack of insurance, limited community treatment options, or other competing challenges, such as finding and maintaining housing and employment because of ineligibility for Veterans Affairs (VA) healthcare.

In the County, there are approximately 300 people who are incarcerated, who have self-identified as Veterans, with estimates of another 300-500 people who are incarcerated, who are not self-identifying, for a number of reasons that include losing their benefits, not considering themselves as Veterans, etc. Additionally, it is estimated that there are 1,500 to 2,000 Veterans involved in the legal system who are out of custody.

To align our County's services with the needs of justice-involved Veterans, the Los Angeles County Department of Military and Veteran Affairs (MVA) has spearheaded a multi-departmental collaboration to address these urgent needs. MVA has partnered with the Office of the Public Defender (PD), Office of the Alternate Public Defender (APD), Justice, Care and Opportunities Department (JCOD), LA County Sheriff's Department (LASD), Probation Department, and the Greater Los Angeles Veterans Administration (GLAVA) to begin having conversations around gaps in data collection,

standardizing screening processes, identifying needs, and exploring ways to streamline services and support to all justice-involved Veterans.

The goal of this collaboration is to enhance ongoing efforts by the County through the partnership with the VA to continue to press forward the strategic plan of the Board of Supervisors' (Board) "care first, jails last" agenda. In doing so, we aim to break the cycle of homelessness and incarceration by recognizing the specialized needs of justice-involved Veterans and coordinating targeted and tailored interventions. Through systemic improvements, data-driven strategies, cross-sector collaboration, partnerships, and innovation, the County is committed to serving our Veteran community, just as they once served us.

↓ WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Direct the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, in close collaboration with the Justice, Care, and Opportunities Department, Public Defender, Alternate Public Defender, LAHSA/HI, LA Sheriff's Department, Probation, Department of Health Services, Department of Mental Health, Department of Public Health, District Attorney, the County's Center for Strategic Partnerships, and other relevant stakeholders, to report back to the Board, in writing, in 90 days about, but not limited to:
 - a. With the Chief Executive Office, identify one-time funding, including the use of AB 109 funds, to retain a consultant, that demonstrate a commitment to align, comply, and fully implement the Board's "care first" goals, to work with named County Departments and appropriate state and federal stakeholders such as CalVet and the Veterans

Administration to design and develop recommendations specific to creating an LA County approach to enhancing services for justice-involved Veterans;

- b. Upon securing a consultant, within 90 days, create an implementation plan with a timeline, including relevant benchmarks, on how to enhance services for justice-involved Veterans, which would cover:
 - i. Data sharing between involved Departments;
 - ii. Create standardized jail intake screening questions that would cover areas such as:
 - a. Housing
 - b. Employment
 - iii. Expand identification strategies of Veterans upon jail intake;
 - iv. Train County staff, who engage with incarcerated Veterans, on how to provide trauma-informed care for this population;
 - v. Recruit and hire County staff and County contractors with lived experience and a military background to engage with the justice-involved Veteran community;
 - vi. Create and expand alternative sentencing and diversion opportunities for Veterans, including partnering with community-based providers who have experience working with the Veteran community;
 - vii. Streamline re-entry services specifically tailored and appropriate for justice-involved Veterans;

- viii. Develop strategies on how to engage and support Veterans who are not eligible for VA healthcare by identifying other sources of healthcare support or resources;
- ix. Provide opportunities for expungement and record clearing services and sentence reduction;
- x. Expand current pretrial release for incarcerated Veterans in order to retain VA benefits;
- xi. With support from the Sheriff and LA Sheriff's Department, create a working partnership with the Police Chiefs Association and other law enforcement partners to support coordination for services for justice-involved Veterans; and
- xii. Engage with Court partners to support coordination of services for justice-involved Veterans.

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