

**Support for Senate Bill 357 (Menjivar): Youth Justice Reform Implementation through Delegated Authority**

Los Angeles County (County) has embarked on a transformational journey to reimagine its youth justice system, committing to a care-first approach grounded in healing, accountability, and equity. The establishment and growth of the Department of Youth Development (DYD) reflects this vision: a commitment to preventative, rehabilitative, and developmentally appropriate services for young people, particularly those most impacted by systemic inequities.

Since its launch, DYD has demonstrated measurable success by diverting youth away from punitive systems, reducing recidivism, and improving educational and mental health outcomes through community-based partnerships and holistic, trauma-informed programming.<sup>1</sup> This approach is aligned with national best practices and has garnered broad public support.

<sup>1</sup> [DYD Diversion Evaluation, 2024](#)

MOTION

SOLIS	_____
MITCHELL	_____
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BARGER	_____

DYD's 2024 evaluation report revealed that 95% of youth enrolled in the program remained free from legal trouble, compared to approximately 20% of those who did not participate. Additionally, the program resulted in cost savings of \$40,000 per youth by reducing the need for arrest or court involvement. Key outcomes of the participating young people included improvements in emotional regulation, school engagement, social support, and conflict resolution skills – critical outcomes that the Probation Department has failed to demonstrate success in.

In contrast, the Los Angeles County Probation Department (Probation) continues to experience deep-seated crises. Probation, the facilities they oversee, and most importantly, the youth in Probation's custody, remain in crisis. On April 18, 2025, Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Miguel Espinoza ordered Probation to depopulate Los Padrinos Juvenile (Los Padrinos) after the facility was deemed unsuitable for housing youth by state regulators due to staffing and other issues.

In December 2024, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (Board) granted Chief Probation Officer Guillermo Viera Rosa unprecedented emergency powers to prevent the closure of Los Padrinos, including declaring a local emergency, expedited hiring authority, and the ability to seek mutual aid from other law enforcement agencies. Despite these authorities – many of which are not afforded to other County departments – Probation remains in crisis.

In spite of the numerous efforts by this Board to reform Probation, the department has failed to create a safe and supportive environment for youth in its care. These failures have drawn criticism from oversight bodies, legal advocates, and community stakeholders alike, and have prompted urgent calls for structural reform.

Probation's plan to depopulate Los Padrinos is to redistribute youth across several facilities as part of a broader Global Plan, which has yet to receive Board approval, and at multiple points requires state approval. Key aspects involve:

- Moving boys at Campus Vernon Kilpatrick (Kilpatrick) whose good behavior earned the less restrictive environment back to Barry J. Nidorf (Nidorf), which in turn, would increase the population of Nidorf to nearly 150 youth;
- Kilpatrick would house all girls and gender-expansive youth, including those transferred from Los Padrinos and Dorothy Kirby Center (Kirby);
- Kirby would be converted to a boys-only special needs facility; and
- Camps Afflerbaugh, Paige, and Rockey would absorb additional post-disposition boys.

All of the aforementioned actions require the approval of the California Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC), the regulatory body which ordered the closure of Nidorf last February.

As attempts at reform and additional emergency powers have failed to yield different results, change is needed for juvenile oversight in Los Angeles County. State Senate Bill (SB) 357 (Menjivar) proposes empowering Los Angeles County to develop and manage our own youth rehabilitation systems, consistent with modern, equitable, rehabilitative practices. SB 357 is aligned with the County's long-standing objectives to decarcerate girls and gender-expansive youth, move more boys to less restrictive placements (LRPs), and expand holistic, educational, and therapeutic services to the youth in our care.

SB 357 is designed to support Los Angeles County's shift toward a more

developmentally appropriate and health-focused youth justice system by expanding the role of DYD while maintaining Juvenile Division Courts' authority and the peace officer duties only Probation POST-certified staff are able to perform. The bill does not alter the current relationship between the courts and Probation regarding recommendations about dispositions or conditions of supervision. Probation will continue to offer recommendations to the court as it does today.

This bill enables the County to enact and expand the goals of youth justice reimagined by allowing DYD to lead programming and supportive services, giving capacity to Probation deputies to focus on its primary duties of keeping all involved safe and secure. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) would define the roles and boundaries between the two departments. Over time, the County could begin placing lower-risk youth in less restrictive, community-based placements under DYD oversight, while higher-risk youth would remain in secure facilities where Probation will ensure safety and DYD will deliver rehabilitative programming.

SB 357 has the potential to close a crucial gap in the way that Los Angeles County approaches oversight for the youth in our care.

**I, THEREFORE, MOVE** that the Board of Supervisors direct the Chief Executive Office-Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations to take all appropriate legislative advocacy actions to support Senate Bill 357 (Menjivar), which would grant a county with a population of at least 3,500,000 people, the authority to bring in another County entity to support their Probation Department, to ensure the youth justice system prioritizes rehabilitation and the services, programs, and placements young people need to successfully return to the community, including but not limited to, sending a five-

signature letter in support of the bill to Senator Caroline Menjivar and the Los Angeles County Delegation.

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LH:nw