

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR JANICE HAHN

AGN. NO.
June 17, 2025

Send a Five-Signature Letter to Oppose the Proposed Change to the Intake Policy at the Pine Grove Youth Conservation Camp

The Pine Grove Youth Conservation Camp (Pine Grove) is a fire camp run by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) for young men between the ages of 18 and 25 who have been convicted of a felony as a juvenile. Youth serving their time in the Secure Youth Treatment Facility (SYTF) can choose to spend the rest of their sentence at Pine Grove if a judge agrees to the placement. At Pine Grove, youth receive training provided by CAL FIRE and are certified to engage in wildland firefighting operations. They become part of fire crews that perform fire suppression services across the State and respond to wildfires during the fire season. Most recently, youth from Pine Grove were deployed to Los Angeles County during the devastating Eaton and Palisades fires.

Pine Grove offers youth convicted of serious crimes the unique opportunity to voluntarily participate in a rehabilitation program while serving the remainder of their sentence. According to the Pine Grove website, the “major emphasis of the camp programs is to provide youths with employable skills and to develop within them a strong emphasis on solid work habits. In addition, youths receive leadership training within their

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crew structure.¹ Once youth complete the Pine Grove program, they have the opportunity to pursue wildland firefighting as a career in California. Also, the passage of Assembly Bill 2147 in 2020 allows formerly incarcerated firefighters the opportunity to get their records expunged so they can become firefighter paramedics in California. While Pine Grove may not be the best choice for every youth in SYTF, it remains an important option for those who choose to participate.

Currently, Pine Grove has a policy that prohibits anyone with active asthma from participating in the program due to health concerns. Under this policy, youth with a history of childhood asthma are still able to participate in Pine Grove if their asthma is no longer active and has not required medication for a certain number of years. However, the CDCR has decided to change their policy beginning July 1, 2025, to ban anyone with a history of childhood asthma from participating in Pine Grove. This policy change would have dramatic and devastating effects on youth from Los Angeles County and their opportunity to participate in Pine Grove. Los Angeles County has a higher than national rate of childhood asthma, and the rate is particularly high in urban neighborhoods along the freeways. Additionally, in LA County, the rate of childhood asthma is the highest among African American children.² Therefore, a policy that prohibits anyone with childhood asthma from participating in Pine Grove could have disproportionate negative impacts on LA County African American youth from urban environments. Additionally, a blanket ban on anyone with a history of asthma goes above and beyond the policies of the LA County Fire Department. The LA County Fire Department does not have any ban on employment or firefighting duties due to a history of asthma. Neither should Pine

¹ <https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/facility-locator/conservation-camps/pine-grove-camp/>

² [Survey Examines Effects of Asthma on Los Angeles County Children](#)

Grove.

Finally, this proposed policy change could negatively impact Los Angeles County's ability to implement the Court approved depopulation plan at Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall (Los Padrinos). The Board of Supervisors proclaimed a local emergency at Los Padrinos on December 17, 2024, in response to the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) determining that the facility was unsuitable for the detention of youth. The local emergency is ongoing and on May 16, 2025, Judge Miguel Espinoza approved a depopulation plan submitted by the LA County Probation Department (Department). As part of his approval, Judge Espinoza ordered the Department to identify all predisposition and SYTF youth who appear suitable to be screened by CDCR for placement at Pine Grove and submit the information to the Court.³ The potential change in policy could impact this assessment and screening, and the ability of Probation and the Courts to approve placements at Pine Grove as part of the effort to depopulate Los Padrinos and address the current state of emergency.

The proposed policy change to ban anyone with a history of asthma from participating in the Pine Grove Youth Conservation Camp could have the chilling effect of preventing youth with the opportunity to participate in a rehabilitation program that could set them up for success upon their release. A policy like this is most likely to impact African American youth from urban cities, having a disproportionate racial impact here in Los Angeles County. Additionally, the policy is unnecessarily strict - not even the LA County Fire Department has a policy with such strong limitations. If a history of childhood asthma does not prevent someone from becoming a firefighter with a Fire Department, it should not prevent a youth from participating in a Fire Camp program. The Board of

³ https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/probation/1184979_EspinozaOrderRe051625Hearing.pdf

Supervisors should send a five-signature letter to the CDCR in opposition to the new policy.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Chief Executive Office Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations to send a five-signature letter to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation opposing the proposed new policy to prohibit any youth with a history of childhood asthma from participating in the Pine Grove Youth Conservation Camp program.

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