

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR JANICE HAHN

Proclaiming Public Defense Day

On March 18, 1963, the United States Supreme Court ruled unanimously in *Gideon v. Wainwright* (1963) 372 U.S. 335 that states are required, under the Sixth Amendment of the United States Constitution, to provide assistance of counsel to individuals facing criminal prosecution by the government who are unable to afford to hire private counsel. As the oldest and largest indigent criminal defense agency in the United States, the Los Angeles County Public Defender’s Office has been providing public defense in Los Angeles County since 1914, 50 years before the *Gideon v. Wainwright* mandate. Sixty-two years after *Gideon v. Wainwright*, public defense has expanded to include counsel for any person facing incarceration, as well as for youth in delinquency proceedings and enumerated post-conviction matters.

For Angelenos who encounter the criminal legal system, they are guaranteed access to quality public defense services if not by the Public Defender, then through the Los Angeles County Alternative Public Defender’s Office, or alternatively, through Independent Defense Counsel’s Office, all of whom provide a robust continuum of representation. Because of its collective commitment to client-centered representation, Los Angeles County has led the nation in advancing client-centered representation and becoming a model for jurisdictions across the nation. Today, Los Angeles County’s

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leadership in public defense continues to influence policy and practice nationwide, reflecting Los Angeles County's deep commitment to ensuring equal access to quality representation and justice.

Through various local and nationally recognized innovations in client-representation, community-based advocacy, and data-driven reform, Los Angeles County public defenders have advanced the promise of Gideon and strengthened the right to counsel for millions. To honor the tireless work of public defenders and court-appointed counsel across the country, Los Angeles County celebrates March 18th as Public Defense Day.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors proclaim March 18, 2026, as Public Defense Day to celebrate the holding in *Gideon v. Wainwright* and its constitutional guarantee of indigent defense.

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JH:cc/ap