



**PUBLIC REQUEST TO ADDRESS
THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA**

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

HILDA L. SOLIS
HOLLY J. MITCHELL
LINDSEY P. HORVATH
JANICE HAHN
KATHRYN BARGER

Correspondence Received

The following individuals submitted comments on agenda item:				
Agenda #	Relate To	Position	Name	Comments
70.		Other	Maria Jose Vides	
		Item Total	1	
Grand Total			1	

April 9th, 2026

Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors:
Supervisor Mitchell
Supervisor Solis
Supervisor Horvath
Supervisor Hahn
Supervisor Barger

Via email: executiveoffice@bos.lacounty.gov

Re: Item 70 - 2026-27 Recommended Budget (Prioritizing Investments To Deliver Safety and Care While Reducing Reliance on Incarceration).

Dear Board of Supervisors,

We, the undersigned organizations, urge you to prioritize targeted investments in the fiscal year (FY) 2026–27 budget that advance Los Angeles County’s Care First vision and reduce the overincarceration of Angelenos with mental health needs. While Los Angeles County has made important strides in developing programs for people with the most acute behavioral health needs, far less infrastructure exists to support the larger number of people with low to moderate needs who could be safely stabilized in community-based settings. Expanding access to care for this population is a critical and underutilized opportunity to reduce jail populations while improving outcomes.

The Los Angeles County jail system is [the largest mental health institution](#) in the country—as of [March](#), **more than 60 percent of people in the jail system have an identified mental health need**. But with [dangerous overcrowding](#) and [limited access](#) to effective care, jails in Los Angeles County are [ill-equipped to meet these needs](#). The county spends an average of [\\$89,000](#) annually to incarcerate one person—including an estimated \$701 per day for people in mental health units. Community-based housing and treatment, on the other hand, costs just an estimated \$224 per day.¹ Incarceration is not a substitute for treatment; effective care requires shifting resources to solutions that support and stabilize people in the community.

Now more than ever—with tightened budgets and a surging jail population—we should be investing in cost-effective solutions that are proven to work: [community-based treatment](#), [housing](#), and [workforce supports](#). These services deliver what jails cannot—treatment, [stability](#), and [reduced](#) recidivism rates—and at a fraction of the cost.

Los Angeles is a [national leader](#) in [diversion](#), and the FY2026–27 budget presents an opportunity to build on that progress. In the wake of investments in [jail renovations](#) at Pitchess Detention Center South and a [\\$1.2 million budget request](#) from the LA County Sheriff’s Department (LASD) to begin designing a mental health jail—despite the county’s commitment to close Men’s Central Jail without a replacement—**we respectfully urge the board to reaffirm the county’s**

¹ Jail-based mental health care and housing costs are derived from inflation-adjusted estimates in Los Angeles County’s 2021 Men’s Central Jail Closure Plan (page 10); the figure does not include cost of care provided by Correctional Health Services. See https://ceo.lacounty.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/ODR-Report-re-Mens-Central-Jail_March-30-2021.pdf.

commitment to the “Care First, Jails Last” vision by making meaningful, sustained investments in the infrastructure necessary to treat people with low-level mental health needs in community settings. We urge the board to prioritize and begin making these investments in the FY2026–27 budget.

- 1. Fund permanent supportive housing (PSH) earmarked for people exiting ODR diversion (\$82.7 million over five years, with continued funding beyond that reflecting ongoing need).** PSH is one of the most effective interventions for [preventing reincarceration](#) and promoting [adherence to behavioral health treatment](#)—while [creating long-term stability](#) for individuals, families, and communities. This investment would fund enough PSH slots for everyone exiting ODR after two years, as explained below: approximately 2,100 over five years.² Expanding access to housing for people exiting the ODR Housing program would allow ODR to divert more people, reduce reliance on incarceration, and provide more appropriate, [less restrictive treatment](#) options.
- 2. Expand Office of Diversion and Reentry (ODR) Housing programs (\$420 million over five years).** Expanding investment in the Office of Diversion and Reentry (ODR) Housing program would allow Los Angeles County to divert more people with low to moderate mental health needs into community-based treatment and supportive housing instead of continued incarceration. [ODR Housing](#) is a nationally recognized model for mental health diversion shown to improve [housing stability and reduce criminal justice involvement](#), all at a significantly lower cost than jail-based mental health housing (approximately \$50,000 per year vs approximately \$287,000).³ In recent years, ODR has shifted a majority of its capacity to serve people with the highest acuity mental health needs (P3 and P4 classifications), leaving a significant gap in services for people with lower to moderate needs. With an investment of \$420 million over 5 years, the ODR could divert approximately 140 people with low to moderate mental health needs from jail each month—serving 1,680 people per year, or 8,400 over five years. This funding would cover all costs to ODR to provide two years of housing, case management, clinical services, administrative and clinical oversight, and pre-release support for each person.⁴
- 3. Launch the Justice, Care and Opportunities Department’s (JCOD) Rapid Diversion Program (RDP) at two additional courthouses (\$5.6 million over three years, with continued funding based on ongoing need).** [RDP](#) is a pre-plea diversion program designed to support people with mental health diagnoses or substance use needs through case management, behavioral health care, and connections to supportive services over a 12-to-24-month period. From the program’s launch in June 2015 to February 2026, RDP has diverted more than 4,000 cases. The program has [demonstrated strong](#)

² These figures are based on program estimates provided by the Office of Diversion and Reentry (ODR), which assume a 1% monthly attrition rate among 140 participants enrolled each month. Under these assumptions, approximately 110 individuals transition to permanent supportive housing each month after completing 24 months of diversion. Permanent supportive housing costs are estimated at \$40,200 annually, based on estimates by ODR.

³ Cost estimates for ODR are based on figures provided by the Office of Diversion and Reentry. Jail-based mental health care and housing costs are derived from inflation-adjusted estimates in Los Angeles County’s 2021 [Men’s Central Jail Closure Plan](#), assuming the average cost is closer to the estimate for Twin Towers than for CRDF (pg 10).

⁴ The estimated \$420 million over five years to divert 140 individuals per month is based on program data and estimate projections provided by the Office of Diversion and Reentry. The figure includes a projected 2.5% annual increase to these costs as rent, staffing, and other costs rise.

[outcomes](#), with 91 percent of graduates avoiding new criminal cases as of April 2024. However, RDP currently operates in only eight of the County’s 20 courthouses, creating geographic inequities and limiting access for eligible participants. With an investment of \$5.6 million over three years, JCOD can expand RDP’s reach to two additional courthouses—allowing the county to safely divert an estimated 322 incarcerated people with low to moderate mental health needs into their communities.⁵

4. **Expand JCOD’s workforce programs for system-impacted people (\$8.5 million annually, with continued funding based on ongoing need).** JCOD’s workforce programs provide system-impacted people—including those released pretrial and those with low mental health needs—with training and paid work experience in high-demand sectors, including the building trades. The programs offer career pathways and a stable income—[interventions proven](#) to lower recidivism, reduce spending in the criminal justice system, and support long-term economic security. JCOD provides case management, [connections to supportive services](#), [job training](#), and [employment support](#) at a cost of [approximately \\$8,500 per participant](#)—a fraction of the cost of incarceration. JCOD’s [SECTOR](#) (Skills and Experience for the Careers of Tomorrow) program [demonstrates strong outcomes](#), with 87 percent of participants avoiding new arrests and 96 percent avoiding new convictions within one year of enrolling in the program. With an \$8.5 million annual investment, JCOD’s workforce programs could serve 1,000 system-impacted Angelenos—reducing incarceration while strengthening the regional fire recovery and housing development workforce to address our housing and affordability crisis.⁶
5. **Bolster holistic defense within the Public Defender’s Office (\$5.9 million).** Increased funding for mental health clinical supervisors, psychiatric social workers (PSWs), and Partners for Justice (PFJ) advocates would strengthen the Public Defender Office’s (PDO) Holistic Defense Program and expand Los Angeles County’s capacity to assess behavioral health needs soon after arrest. With additional staff, the county can conduct timely clinical assessments and connect clients to clinically appropriate community-based treatment programs—particularly those with low to moderate mental health needs who would otherwise languish in jail [without access to appropriate behavioral care](#). By working alongside attorneys, [PSWs help](#) stabilize clients early in the legal process, [reduce lengths of jail stay](#)—including costly pretrial detention—while [improving case outcomes](#), easing unsafe jail overcrowding, and lowering the risk of costly litigation. A \$5.9 million investment from the FY2026-27 budget would enable Los Angeles County to hire two mental health clinical supervisors, 10 PSWs, and 30 PFJ advocates to staff an additional 10 branch courts. This would reduce waitlist times and serve an estimated 7,000 Angelenos navigating legal proceedings annually.⁷

⁵ JCOD estimates the cost of expanding RDP to one additional courthouse [over three years at \\$2.78 million](#). Based on estimates provided by the Department, expansion to two additional courthouses during a fiscal year is realistic, making the total cost \$5.6 million. Likewise, based on a high-level analysis, JCOD estimates that launching RDP in all remaining 12 criminal courthouses could reduce the jail population by up to 2,410 people. This amounts to roughly 161 people per courthouse or 322 for two courthouses, assuming RDP would have an equal impact at all courthouses. However, JCOD would prioritize volume of eligible felony cases and impact on custody population as key criteria when identifying new courthouse launch sites.

⁶ JCOD workforce program service capacity and cost estimates are based on information provided by the department.

⁷ Based on estimates provided by the Public Defender’s Office, total staffing costs are projected at \$5,901,004. Each branch court team is expected to complete 55-60 assessments per month per branch, reaching 6,600-7,200 individuals annually across 10 courts.

An investment in care-based infrastructure is an investment in safe, thriving communities. We urge you to take this opportunity to invest in Angelenos and our future.

Sincerely,

ACLU of Southern California

Alliance for Boys and Men of Color

A New Way Of Life

Bend the Arc

California Coalition for Women's Prisoners

Californians United for a Responsible Budget

Carceral Ecologies Lab

Center for Living and Learning

Chrysalis

Community Health Project Los Angeles

Courage California

Dignity and Power Now

Drug Policy Alliance

Empowering Women Impacted by Incarceration

End Child Poverty CA

Essie Justice Group

Friends Outside in Los Angeles County

Gente Organizada

Hang Out Do Good

Homies Unidos Inc.

Initiate Justice

InsideOUT Writers

La Defensa

LA Forward Institute

League of Women Voters of LA County

Los Angeles County Reentry Health
Advisory Collaborative (RHAC)

Los Angeles Regional Reentry Partnership
(LARRP)

Paving the Way Foundation

Sister Warriors

Timelist Group, Inc

TransLatin@ Coalition

Urban Peace Institute

The Vera Institute of Justice

Young Women's Freedom Center

Zealous