

February 28, 2023

**MOTION BY SUPERVISOR LINDSEY P. HORVATH**

**Ensuring Reliable Access to Reading Materials for Individuals Incarcerated in Los Angeles County Jails**

The power of reading cannot be understated. Regardless of age or circumstance, reading can be a source of relaxation and promotes mental and emotional wellness. In group settings, such as classrooms and airplanes, reading is a proven way to keep people busy and independently engaged. This is all in addition to the proven academic and intellectual benefits of reading which may include expanded vocabulary; development of analytical and comprehension skills; and improved memory. Just as exercise improves muscle strength, reading is a workout for the brain.

February is Library Lover's Month. The County has an opportunity to recognize this event and commit to the value of reading by taking meaningful steps to ensure reading materials are readily accessible to individuals who are incarcerated in Los Angeles County. Making this happen is a shared goal between the Board, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD), and members of the public. Fortunately, the current LASD administration agrees and is committed to addressing any gaps that exist in this regard.

In recent weeks, LASD began to assess all living spaces within its jails to identify opportunities to install bookshelves. Incarcerated individuals will continue to keep books if they wish (even if they leave custody) but, should they wish to "return" a book, the bookshelves will

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provide a centralized location within housing units to store books and make them available for use by others. Likewise, the Department is committed to reinvigorating its mobile book program, which slowed during the pandemic, with the many books donated by members of the public and other entities. Finally, the Department is interested in reviving a pilot program in which individuals are provided with reading tablets that make hundreds of books, and mobile games, easily accessible.

**I, THEREFORE, MOVE** that the Board of Supervisors request that the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) report back to the Board, in writing, in 90 days with the following:

1. An update on its efforts to install bookshelves throughout County jail facilities and to institute regular schedules, through unit orders, for the mobile book carts that are used to deliver books to each unit. The Department is encouraged to explore empowering incarcerated individuals (including trustees) to become responsible for maintaining book catalogues, establishing a borrowing system, and otherwise being responsible for the management of the books in their respective units;
2. An analysis of whether LASD can make book donation information (e.g., locations, policies, particular requests, etc.) readily available to the public via its website; and
3. A proposal for reinstituting the previous pilot program to make reading tablets available to individuals who are incarcerated. The proposal should include potential location(s), number of tablets needed, and a budget analysis for all costs associated with such a pilot program.

**I, FURTHER, MOVE** that the Board of Supervisors request that LASD reach out to the Los Angeles County Library Director and report back to the Board, in writing, in 90 days with a description of opportunities for the two Departments to partner on book collection/donation and sharing information about book donations with the public.