



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES PROBATION COMMISSION

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JOE GARDNER

President
Los Angeles County Probation Commission

March 13, 2019

TO: Supervisor Janice Hahn, Chair
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl
Supervisor Hilda L. Solis
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Kathryn Barger

FROM: Joe Gardner, President

SUBJECT: RE-PURPOSING OF THE PROBATION REFORM AND IMPLEMENTATION TEAM. (P.R.I.T.)

At the direction of the members of Probation Commission, I am writing to inform you of a concern regarding Board actions taken on February 5th and 19th including the motion tasking the Probation Reform and Implementation Team (P.R.I.T.) to conduct a hearing and provide a report back to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors on safety concerns at the County's juvenile justice facilities.

These actions taken by the Board of Supervisors essentially re-tasking P.R.I.T. will delay and impede the implementation of the Probation Oversight Commission (P.O.C.). We ask the Board of Supervisors to permit the P.R.I.T. to continue with their original mission, assisting with establishment of the P.O.C.

Logically, the Probation Commission would have been more suited for this task. We are chartered in state law to be advisors the Chief Probation Officer. The Board of Supervisors selected members to serve on the Probation Commission based on their experience and knowledge. Our ranks consist of community activists, child advocates, attorneys, educators, law enforcement, a retired judge, a retired member of the State Assembly and executives of community-based organizations. Since members of the Probation Commission have undergone security checks to enter the County's juvenile facilities and annually conduct state-mandated site inspections, we have knowledge and insight that could be beneficial.

The Probation Commission fulfills state mandates by holding 22 hearings a year, probing into many areas of the Probation Department to correct deficiencies regarding the safety and treatment of minors. We have pressed the Chief and members of the leadership of the Probation Department to address deficiencies. Reports and recorded testimony of our findings have been provided to the Department for their review with recommendations for corrective action. We expect their accountability by pressing them

to report actions taken. As we are a Brown Act body, our minutes and documents are available to the public. Every one of our hearings represent progress in resolving the very same shared concerns of the Board of Supervisors.

Probation Commissioners travel and spend hours at meeting, doing site visits and completing reports. Each of us take our oath of office seriously to assure the safety and humane treatment of those under the care of the Probation Department.

The Probation Commission is keenly aware of the challenges the Probation Department faces. Although the population of minors within the camps and juvenile halls has dropped, the Department is now dealing with youth with high needs and who suffer from trauma and mental illness. We believe it is time to expand services at a dedicated mental treatment facility operated by the Department of Mental Health. We also believe the Probation Department should continue to provide peripheral security and support at such a facility. It is also critical to provide resources after minors exit the custody of the Probation Department to deter recidivism.

We have been concerned for some time about the rise in the use of pepper spray and use of force, including assaults on line staff which were uncovered in our inspections and revealed in the media. We also discovered failures to hold minors accountable by not prosecuting new offenses against staff and other minors within the facilities.

The Probation Department needs resources. It must quickly implement dialectical behavior therapy and de-escalation training at all levels of the Department to stem use of force incidents and the Department must continue to bring positive changes within its culture. The Probation Department must make capital expenditures for equipment to collect, manage and track various streams of data so their efforts can be evaluated and measured to ensure good outcomes for youth and adults under their care and supervision.

The Probation Commission will continue to work diligently on behalf of the residents of Los Angeles County as established by Board Order 111 in September 1999. We will continue to serve as advisors to the Chief Probation Officer as authorized under 240 of the Welfare and Institutions Code to ensure those being served by the Probation Department receive humane and just treatment.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Los Angeles County Probation Commission,



Joe Gardner

President and Commissioner, 5th District

c: Chief Executive Office
County Counsel
Justice Deputies