



July 21, 2014

Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple
Los Angeles, CA 90012
executiveoffice@bos.lacounty.gov

Support for Motion by Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas - Initial Steps to Support a Comprehensive Diversion Plan for Los Angeles County

Dear Los Angeles Board of Supervisors:

Advancement Project strongly supports Supervisor Ridley-Thomas' motion for the County to identify and set aside at least \$20 million to fund the implementation of a coordinated and comprehensive diversion program. Further, Advancement Project applauds the motion's inclusion of forward-thinking instructions to LA County leadership to identify ongoing funding for long term support of a mental health diversion program. This motion is an important first step toward reducing overcrowding in LA County jails, providing those with mental health issues and co-occurring disorders with the treatment they need, improving public safety, and saving taxpayer dollars.

Of the approximately 19,000 individuals currently in LA County jails, an estimated one out of every five has been diagnosed with a mental illness, contributing significantly to the overcrowding issues the County faces. Research indicates that community-based treatment of people with mental illness is far less expensive and much more effective than incarceration, with estimated savings at \$28,000 to \$42,600 per individual diverted per year in addition to reduced recidivism rates. An effective diversion program, therefore, could greatly reduce the number of inmates cycling in and out of LA County jails while also enhancing public safety and improving health outcomes for those with mental illness and/or co-occurring disorders – all at a reduced cost to the County.

Advancement Project strongly urges your support for the Ridley-Thomas diversion program motion, and we commend the Supervisor for making a powerful case for its passage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "SK Lee", written in a cursive style.

Susan K. Lee, JD
National Director of Urban Peace
Advancement Project