



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 17, 2017

Contact: Al Naipo, (213) 974-2222

Email: anaipo@bos.lacounty.gov

Contact: Christina Villacorte, (213) 447-1277

Email: cvillacorte@bos.lacounty.gov

Probation Reform: Oversight and Accountability

Determined to transform the deeply troubled Probation Department, the Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to consider an independent entity that would consolidate the various reforms recommended over the years and propose a roadmap for finally implementing those changes, with oversight and accountability.

“The reform efforts already underway are promising but fragmented,” said Board Chairman Mark Ridley-Thomas, principal author of the [motion](#). “We need a singular vision and a comprehensive approach that will leave no stone unturned in addressing, once and for all, the deeply entrenched and systemic problems plaguing the nation’s largest Probation Department.”

“The need for reform and accountability is underscored by troubling events over the past several weeks, including the sentencing of a Probation officer who sexually assaulted girls as young as 15 at Camp Scudder, and the discovery that youth are still subjected to solitary confinement at Central Juvenile Hall more than a year after the Board banned that practice,” he added.

The motion called for analyzing whether the existing Probation Commission can be strengthened and repurposed to serve as that independent entity. If not, the Board would consider creating one.

The Office of Inspector General, which already provides oversight of the Sheriff’s Department, may see its scope expanded to include the Probation Department. Supervisor Sheila Kuehl had sought that amendment to the motion.

The motion’s coauthor, Supervisor Janice Hahn, said, “This is the time to move

forward and bring together everybody's past, present and future wishes and dreams and visions for the kind of Probation Department that LA County warrants, one that will have real accountability and reform as we move forward."

"There have been numerous and sometimes duplicative efforts to examine the Department over the past couple of years, and I think the time has come for us to stop doing that," Supervisor Kathryn Barger said. "There's a lot of data, research, interviews, analysis, legal opinion and more that is ready at our fingertips. Having transparency is key, as is having a roadmap moving forward."

A diverse group of stakeholders provided testimony in support of the motion, including representatives of State Assemblyman Raul Bocanegra and LA Mayor Eric Garcetti, as well as a range of criminal justice reform advocates.

LA County Bar Association Independent Juvenile Defender Office director Cyn Yamashiro was one of four Probation Commissioners who spoke in favor of the motion. He noted that after decades of efforts to reform Probation, "we are still in what I would almost describe as a crisis." He likened Probation to a ship with competent captains hoisting its sails but hampered by a number of problematic crewmembers below deck, adding, "I think oversight will be akin to a tugboat to get the ship going where it needs to go."

Jose Osuna testified that he is a former probationer who works with current probationers as external affairs director of Homeboy Industries. "I come to you with 30 years of frustration (with the department) but I do favor this motion because I think any step in the right direction is a good thing, and I think this is a strong step. I think we need to find a way to tie all these (reform) efforts that we've undertaken and spent so much taxpayer money on, so that these efforts don't go to waste."

Urban Peace Institute criminal justice program manager Josh Green said the motion "represents an opportunity to create the lasting vision and oversight that are essential to transforming Probation."

###