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### **[Board Approves Unprecedented Probation Reform and Oversight](#)**

The Board of Supervisors voted to adopt a comprehensive roadmap for reforming the troubled Probation Department, including creating a Probation Oversight Commission with unprecedented authority to conduct inquiries and investigations in partnership with the Office of Inspector General.

“Probation reform is the order of the day,” said Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, lead author of the motion. “Rehabilitation should be the thrust of Probation, and we owe it to the department’s approximately 9,000 youth and 47,000 adult clients to get this done in a better way.”

“From mismanagement of grant funds to abuses in the camps, the challenges are so widespread and systematic that they stymie those in Probation who are trying to do good work,” Supervisor Ridley-Thomas added. “I believe strengthening oversight and increasing accountability can help the department not only improve its operations and fulfill its mandate, but also restore public trust.”

“Today’s action sets into motion a comprehensive process to ensure that the Probation Department is able to make the transformational change that the department and the community deserves,” the motion’s coauthor, Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, said. “As we move forward with implementing a modern approach to criminal justice through concrete and impactful reforms, this new Commission is charged with an important mandate for action. I will continue to work with the Probation Department and my colleagues on the Board to make certain that accountability, transparency and community engagement are a cornerstone of Probation oversight and reform.”

The Board voted to adopt a series of recommendations by County Chief Executive Officer Sachi Hamai, which include immediately creating a short-term Reform and Implementation Team to synthesize decades worth of reform recommendations for Probation into a single unified vision for reform.

The Team would also advise the Board on how to strengthen and repurpose the existing Probation Commission into a new Probation Oversight Commission with a full complement of staff that reports directly to the Board and whose scope will be expanded to include not only youth but adult populations.

The new structure would mirror that of the Sheriff's Civilian Oversight Commission, with the Office of Inspector General acting as the investigative entity for both.

Several advocates and leaders of community organizations welcomed the proposed reforms and stressed the urgent need for oversight. "We have an opportunity here to put into place the type of institutionalized support that can earn the public trust that is so crucial to the effective delivery of services," said Josh Green, criminal justice program director at the Urban Peace Institute. "It represents an important step in ongoing efforts to improve and reimagine what juvenile justice and adult supervision can and should look like in Los Angeles."

Children's Defense Fund-California executive director Shimica Gaskins added, "The motion recognizes the tremendous leadership and reform work currently happening but also recognizes the need for a structure that outlives any particular champion to ensure there is positive, consistent vision, policy and practice serving the youth and adults who come in contact with Probation."

Former LA juvenile court Judge Jan Levine was among two Probation Commissioners who testified in support of the motion. She said, "I have been frustrated by the current Probation Commission's structural impediments to effecting change. The new Probation Oversight Commission will have the staff support that is sorely needed. Combined with the added capacity of the Inspector General, this body will be able to ensure more transparency and provide a forum for families and stakeholders to participate in Probation issues."

The Board also heard testimony from people who have been directly affected by the department. Kent Mendoza, policy coordinator at the Anti-Recidivism Coalition, said, "As someone who was on probation from age 13 to 21, I can personally tell you that reform and oversight are needed. A civilian oversight body with more teeth and robust community engagement are critical principles that will help us sustain reform."

"Probation reform is much needed," said Ingrid Archie, staff member at the community nonprofit A New Way of Life. "We are sick and tired of having to bargain for our humanity."

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