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LA County Considers New Models For Probation Department

Acting on a [motion](#) by Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, co-authored by Supervisor Sheila Kuehl, the Board of Supervisors voted unanimously Tuesday to consider reorganizing the Probation Department into adult and juvenile divisions.

The motion called for contracting with an expert consultant to analyze the pros and cons of changing the structure of the nation's largest Probation Department, which has an annual budget of \$840 million; 6,660 employees; and 70,000 adult and juvenile probationers – all overseen by a single Chief Probation Officer.

Supervisor Ridley-Thomas noted the Probation Department was created in 1903 – more than a century before [AB 109](#) expanded and altered its adult probationer population, and before research on adolescent brain development favored a rehabilitative, instead of punitive, approach for juvenile justice systems.

“It is our duty to conduct a robust examination of the Probation Department and ask whether the current structure can meet the dramatically different needs of two populations: youths and adults,” Supervisor Ridley-Thomas said. “Now is not the time for piecemeal change.”

Supervisor Kuehl added, “Given our vote earlier this month to establish a working group to explore the best ways to provide strong oversight over the Probation Department, the research and analysis outlined in this motion will add a critical question to that overall assessment.”

Several people testified in support of the motion, including interim Chief Probation Officer Calvin Remington, Probation Commission President Cyn Yamashiro, and LA Archdiocese Office of Restorative Justice co-director Javier Stauring.

A few former youth probationers also urged the Board for separate adult and juvenile divisions. They were joined by Homeboy Industries external affairs director Jose Osuna, Anti-Recidivism Coalition policy director Bikila Ochoa, Ph.D., Youth Justice Coalition organizer Kim McGill, and several others.

Under the motion, a consultant would look at the strengths and weaknesses of the department's current structure, budgets, staffing and operations. It would also examine similar departments in other jurisdictions to determine the best practices for monitoring and rehabilitating probationers.

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