



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### [Continuing the Work of Reforming the Jail System](#)

After terminating a contract to build a mental health treatment facility, the Board of Supervisors approved a [motion](#) by Supervisors Mark Ridley-Thomas and Janice Hahn to study the feasibility of demolishing Men’s Central Jail (MCJ), address its most significant maintenance needs in the meantime, and develop a forward-looking long-term strategy for reforming Los Angeles County’s criminal justice system.

The motion also directed the County’s Chief Executive Officer to reconstitute a working group to synthesize the latest research on effective criminal justice reform in order to make recommendations for replacing Men’s Central Jail. The group was also tasked with looking into whether funds from the cancelled contract could be used instead for strategies to scale up alternatives to incarceration, ensure humane treatment of incarcerated individuals, and other priorities.

“I fundamentally believe that we have an obligation to create a criminal justice system that is fair, ensures public safety and accountability, and also offers diversion when appropriate, particularly for those with clinical needs,” Supervisor Ridley-Thomas said.

“While there may be consensus about the need to demolish Men’s Central Jail, the more important question of what should replace it, and how this will fit into our comprehensive strategy for criminal justice reform, remains unresolved,” he added. “As responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars, we need to take the time to do this right and ensure we make the most of this investment, not only in financial resources but, more importantly, in human lives.”

“Canceling the McCarthy contract was necessary, but it can’t end there. Men’s Central Jail remains a decrepit facility that needs to be demolished as soon as possible and replaced,” said Supervisor Janice Hahn. “Today we are moving forward with a thoughtful and deliberative approach to replacing Men’s Central Jail with a facility that more effectively and humanely treats mental illness, while at the same time expanding our diversion efforts so that people who don’t belong in jail don’t end up there in the first place.”

Supervisor Ridley-Thomas said the Board should take advantage of several soon-to-be-released reports by experts in the field, and factor in the potential impact of pending initiatives such as bail reform.

He also called for both critiquing and building on the successes of the County’s psychiatric [urgent care centers](#), [mental evaluation teams](#), the [sobering center](#) – all created within the last few years; the [Office of the Diversion and Reentry](#), whose work is being scaled up; and a first-of-its-kind [behavioral health center](#), which will open in 2020 in what used to be the King/Drew Medical Center.

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