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Contact: Christina Villacorte, (213) 447-1277

Email: cvillacorte@bos.lacounty.gov

Contact: Jethro Rothe-Kushel, (213) 479-6970

Email: jrothe-kushel@bos.lacounty.gov

**SUPERVISOR RIDLEY-THOMAS APPLAUDS GOV. NEWSOM'S 2020-21 BUDGET
Investment That Seeks to Replicate LA County's Efforts to Safely Divert
Thousands of Individuals with Mental Illness from Jail to Treatment**

Homelessness is intimately linked with the criminal and juvenile justice systems and in a comprehensive response to homelessness, Governor Gavin Newsom announced a Community Care Collaborative Pilot (CCCP) that will receive \$24.6 million in 2020-21 and \$364.2 million over 6 years to focus on diversion of individuals with mental health needs into supportive placements. This investment directly builds on the success of LA County's Office of Diversion and Re-entry's (ODR) work diverting people with mental illness from jail to treatment and allows it to further expand efforts in LA County as well as be replicated across the state.

It comes on the heels of a recently released independent study by RAND Corp., commissioned in response to a motion by Supervisors Mark Ridley-Thomas and Kathryn Barger, that noted more than 3,300 people struggling with mental health disorders in Los Angeles County jails are legally suitable and clinically eligible for diversion to community-based treatment programs.

"We know the best solution to homelessness is to prevent someone from becoming homeless. I'm pleased to see the State's investment in doubling down on what the data and our experience has shown to work here in LA County, said Supervisor Ridley-Thomas, who authored the motion that created ODR. "With diversion we create better outcomes without compromising public safety."

The RAND report concluded that of the 5,400 of the county’s average daily jail population, 61 percent meet the criteria currently used by ODR, whose own recent research concluded 56 percent of the County jail’s mental health population is eligible for diversion, with an additional 7 percent also potentially eligible. It also buttresses the aim of the board’s June 2018 motion, led by Supervisor Ridley-Thomas, to expand ODR’s diversion work to other courts throughout LA County.

“Knowing how many people are appropriate for diversion is a first step toward understanding the types of programs, staff and funding that would be needed to treat those individuals in the community,” the study’s lead author, RAND behavioral scientist Stephanie Brooks, said.

Since 2015, when the board created the Office of Diversion and Re-entry within the Department of Health Services (DHS), through a motion led by Supervisor Ridley-Thomas, they have invested more than \$100 million in a combination of long-term and short-term measures. This was done on the belief that sending low-risk individuals with serious mental illness and substance abuse disorders into treatment, rather than jail could make communities safer, break the cycle between jail and homelessness, and ultimately save public funds—and the data has affirmed their efforts. ODR has since diverted more than 4,400 people from County jail to long term care and supportive housing, 90 percent have remained housed after six months.

“We are grateful to Governor Newsom for this opportunity to expand the work we are already doing with hundreds of patients in partnership with the State to improve the lives of those who are incompetent to stand trial by removing them from jail, housing and treating them in the community, where they may remain in supportive housing, said Judge Peter Espinoza, Director of ODR.

“As a community-based provider of 40 years, my colleagues and I commend the Board of Supervisors’ resolve to create a meaningful community-based system of care as an alternative to incarceration. It’s truly been transformative,” said Herbert Hatanaka, Executive Director of Special Services Group. “Gov. Newsom’s announcement and intention to invest state resources into diversion will undoubtedly ensure a more robust system of care here in Los Angeles and throughout the state. These are very exciting times.”

“This investment by the Governor and recent study by RAND simply reinforces our belief when we started on the path to create the Office of Diversion and Reentry—it would be a worthy endeavor that would disrupt the cycle between jail and homelessness, Supervisor Ridley-Thomas added.

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