

JUSTICELA

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March 2, 2022

Victories for a Progressive Care First Vision Passed by Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors: Next Step, A Fully-Funded Care First Budget

The JusticeLA Coalition Celebrates the Establishment of a Department of Youth Development & Independent Pretrial Services in Los Angeles County

LOS ANGELES, CA - Yesterday, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors passed a motion authored by Supervisor Sheila Keuhl establishing the Justice, Care, and Opportunities Department (JCOD) and the Department of Youth Development (DYD). This Board approved motion also establishes independent pretrial services under the new JCOD – a significant shift from the failed Probation led pretrial system that has driven LA County’s pretrial population to nearly 50% of the jail system. The creation of an independent pretrial services agency outside of the probation department is a demand that the community has been voicing for decades.

Noticeably absent from the motion was any funding commitment to support the establishment of the departments and the expansion of desperately needed services. The transformative potential of the JCOD and DYD will be more realized if the Board prioritizes funding these county departments in this year’s budget cycle. The community’s demands at Tuesday’s Board meeting were loud and clear—the Board must take swift action to allocate significant funding for JCOD and DYD and commit to closing Men’s Central Jail by March 2023.

Ivette Alé, Director of Policy and Advocacy for Dignity and Power Now, highlights that “The creation of these departments marks the most transformative policy changes the county has passed since the cancellation of the jail construction contracts in 2019. We have spent the better part of a decade fighting for independent pretrial services that do not rely on law enforcement. Today’s motion actualizes just that - a foundational recommendation of the Care First roadmap that the Board of Supervisors adopted in 2020 and that the community fought for.” They go on to note that this motion is not enough. “What we now expect from the Board are significant funding allocations. Any restructuring of the bureaucracy without a fundamental restructuring of the budget falls short of the transformation this Board has committed to and that this motion promises.”

Eunisses Hernandez, Director of Policy and Advocacy and Co-Founder for La Defensa notes, “The Board’s commitment to move pretrial services out of the deadly hands of law enforcement and into an independent non-law enforcement entity is a transformative step in the right direction. Had we had independent pretrial services and alternatives to incarceration, many of the lives lost while being incarcerated pretrial would still be here with us today. Destiny Ortega would still be here. Jalani Lovett would still be here. John Horton and Quinten Thomas would still be here. The Board’s move is the right

one, backed by years of community political will, research, and recommendations. Now the Board must make this commitment a well-funded reality in LA County—our community members’ lives depend on it.”

Anthony Robles, Campaigns Coordinator for Los Angeles Youth Uprising Coalition says, “As a young person who grew up in LA County, I faced arrest, juvenile court and probation before I was a teenager. I was pushed out of school and landed further in the Men’s Central Jail as a young person who was considered an adult because I was over 18. Neither the criminal justice nor juvenile justice systems work for youth or adults. This is a historic move by the County that young people have been fighting for [for] decades...”

Ezekiel Nishiyama, LA County Youth Commissioner and Advocacy and Community Organizing Coordinator for Anti-Recidivism Coalition reflects, “As a young person I experienced the juvenile justice system here in Los Angeles and we see the same issues for the young people now as when I was in there over 6 years ago. This motion creating the Department of Youth Development will help ensure a care first model and age appropriate care for our system-involved youth.”

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About the JusticeLA Coalition:

JusticeLA is a partnership of grassroots organizations, advocates, directly impacted communities, and stakeholders to reduce the footprint of incarceration by stopping jail expansion and reclaiming, reimagining and reinvesting dollars away from incarceration and into community-based systems of care.