

Los Angeles County Deputy Probation Officers' Union
AFSCME LOCAL 685



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March 23, 2026

The Honorable Hilda Solis
Chair, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
500 W. Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: Agenda Item #12 – Proposed Amendments to Title 5 of the County Code

Dear Madam Chair and Members of the Board of Supervisors:

On behalf of the membership of Los Angeles County Probation Officers Union, AFSCME Local 685, I write concerning Agenda Item #12 on the Board's March 24, 2026 Agenda (proposed amendments to Title 5 of the County Code). The proposed amendments impact terms and conditions of our bargaining union, and in fact, seek to improperly and severely restrict the rights of our members and other sworn employees of the Probation Department in discipline matters. Inasmuch as the existing Civil Service Rules have been in existence for decades without need to restrict and reduce the due process rights of sworn personnel, the County's focus on these changes solely to sworn personnel in the Probation Department points to an express intent to disenfranchise the Department's dedicated and hard-working sworn officers.

The number of significant changes are as follows:

- 1) Allowing hearings on discipline to be based solely entirely on hearsay evidence;
- 2) Doubling from 12 months to 24 months the length of the probationary period for Probation employees;
- 3) Doubling from 30 to 60 days that amount of time employees named in a criminal complaint or indictment can be suspended without pay;
- 4) Allowing an unpaid suspension based on a criminal complaint or indictment alone without any evidence of the employee's guilt other than the complaint or indictment itself;
- 5) Changing the rules concerning the appeals of unpaid suspensions of up to five days;
- 6) Limiting the ability of employees to challenge terminations from employment; and
- 7) Changing the method of serving notices of disciplinary action.

There is no question at all that these changes impact negotiable working conditions. There, likewise, is no dispute that State Law and the County's Employee Relations Ordinance that the County must provide notice to Local 685 and the other labor organizations representing impacted employees and must meet and negotiate over the proposed changes with these organizations. Apart from the requirement to engage in meaningful meeting and negotiating with Local 685 and the other impacted labor unions, there is a significant issue with the **lack of operational connection between the identified emergency and the proposed rule changes.**

For example, what is the operational impediment to the Probation Department to have a 12-month probationary period as is the case with everyone other sworn and non-sworn bargaining unit in the County? In conjunction with this question, has the Board asked the Probation Department for information and statistics on the use of the probationary period as an operational tool to improve performance. On this question alone, Local 685 advises this Board that the Department does not have significant evidence to support any change as it's use over time appears to have diminished since the former Chief Jerry Powers increased its use.

Additionally, what is the operational impact of doubling from 30 to 60 days the amount of time in unpaid status for an employee post disposition? The Department employs Performance Management personnel whose overall work has been reduced over time as the Department employs four separate law firms to represent it Civil Service hearings which previously were performed by PM staff. Over the past ten years, the PM staff appear capable to process the electronic paperwork needed to comply within the current 30-day time period, which the County apparently believes still is acceptable for the remaining sworn officers in the County, including one of the largest sworn unit of officers in the nation in the Sheriff's Department. In the absence of operational evidence that the 30-day time period is sufficient, it appears that the doubling of this time simply may be punitive towards officers whose charges are dismissed or disposed.

Perhaps the most significant issue presented is the substantial due process issue of proposing to allow discipline based solely upon hearsay in the administrative hearing process. The County's Civil Service Commission, as is the case in virtually every administrative hearing process in California and across the County, follows the rule that allows hearsay to be admitted, but does not allow a fact finding to be based solely or entirely upon hearsay. Again, Local 685 asks what is the operational goal proposed to be achieved? Is the goal of being able to rely on what courts find inherently unreliable hearsay evidence alone in due process hearings involving discipline and discharge? This proposal, and its proposed limit solely to sworn personnel in the Probation Department, likely will not withstand legal challenge.

Last, the proposal to allow solely a charge to be the bases for supporting the unpaid status pending outcome of criminal matter also raises substantial operational issues. If the Board requests information from the Civil Service Commission, it will find that the current standard requiring the Departments to provide some evidence apart from the arrest and charge alone came out of a number of Civil Service cases where the Court required more than simply an arrest and charge. As with the proposed hearsay change, this proposal likely would not withstand legal challenge.

Local 685 understands the significant operational challenges facing the Probation Department, as well as the current Chief's consistent use of involuntary mandates with our members. The consistent underlying factor in the Board of State & Community Corrections unsuitability determinations, the Attorney General's Stipulated Judgment Order to Show Cause hearings, and Judge Perez's depopulation orders, is the severe lack of staffing in the Probation Department.

Your Board recently heard and filed the CEO's AB 2561 report on vacant positions that identified the Probation Department hiring only 88 officers from 8,558 applicants in FY 2025-26. The evidence supports proposals to increase hiring and retention, not proposals that diminish and restrict the due process procedures for our members who are on the front lines of meeting the critical staffing needs.

As the representative of one of the impacted employee groups with clear standing, and if the Board approves these proposed County Civil Service rule changes, we are firmly opposed for the reasons stated above and for many other reasons that we can bring to the Board's attention.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Curtis Chambers', with a large, stylized initial 'C'.

Curtis Chambers
President

cc: Guillermo Viera Rosa, Chief Probation Officers, County of Los Angeles
Matt Maldonado, Executive Director, AFSCME Council 36
Coalition of County Unions