



Locals 685
& 1967

COALITION OF L.A. PROBATION UNIONS

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July 10, 2025

The Honorable Nick Schultz, Chair
Assembly Public Safety Committee
State Capitol, Room 4115
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Exposing the Truth Behind SB 357 (Menjivar) and the County of Los Angeles' Claims in Letter Dated June 9, 2025

Dear Chair Schultz, Members of the Assembly Public Safety Committee:

As sworn probation officers, supervisors, and managers proudly represented by AFSCME and SEIU, we are compelled to speak out forcefully against the misleading and politically charged narrative being used to promote SB 357. The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors has claimed that this bill is merely an administrative step to support youth rehabilitation and enhance public safety. In reality, SB 357 is a **deeply flawed and unnecessary piece of legislation** that threatens to undermine the very foundations of California's juvenile justice system. It is not about expanding access to services or improving outcomes for youth – it is about restructuring authority, weakening sworn public safety roles, and laying the groundwork to **civilianize and de-unionize** probation under the guise of reform.

Let us be clear: the outcomes the County claims this bill will achieve – decarceration, diversion, improved services, and community-based programming – **have already been realized** under the current system. The youth remaining in LA County's juvenile halls are not minor offenders; nearly all are 707(b) youth charged with the most **serious and violent crimes**. The Board of Supervisors already has the authority to contract with community-based organizations, implement rehabilitative programming, and reimagine youth justice without any change to state law. SB 357 is a **Trojan horse** – designed not to improve services, but to push a **radical policy agenda that would strip accountability, erode victim protections, and destabilize probation departments across California. We reject this legislation in the strongest possible terms and urge lawmakers to do the same.**

The following pages contain a detailed rebuttal to the County's assertions made in their June 9, 2025, letter. Each section includes the Board of Supervisors' statement in quotation marks, followed by our fact-based response.

1. **“Our Board adopted a motion on May 13, 2025, to support the bill if amended to allow the new lead designee and lead department staff access juvenile records. The recent amendments would provide such records access.”**
 - As sworn probation officers, supervisors, and managers, our oath is to protect public safety and uphold the rights and dignity of victims. The proposal to allow non-sworn, non-background-checked private contractors access to confidential criminal records deeply undermines that duty. These records contain sensitive information about victims, witnesses, and offenders – data that must be safeguarded by those who are vetted, trained, and held to the highest legal standards. Allowing access to individuals who have not been through rigorous screening, and who may even have criminal histories themselves, exposes victims to potential retraumatization, breaches of privacy, and possible retaliation. That is not a risk we should ever be willing to take.
 - We fully support the role of community-based organizations in providing essential rehabilitative programming, and we have seen firsthand how transformative their work can be (see attached list of current Probation Department programs, which does not include the additional programs offered through the County’s Department of Youth Development (DYD)). But supporting these programs must not come at the cost of compromising victim safety or the integrity of the justice system. Access to criminal records must remain the responsibility of sworn officers and other credentialed professionals who operate within strict accountability frameworks. Anything less not only erodes public trust—it endangers the very people the justice system exists to protect.
 - Regarding records access:
 - The County’s shifting narrative regarding access to juvenile case files under SB 357 is both alarming and revealing. During the May 13, 2025, Board of Supervisors meeting, Angela Ovalle, Acting Branch Manager, County of Los Angeles’ Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations, explicitly stated: **“The bill also does not provide access to juvenile case files. That is something that would need to be amended in the code.”** Yet now, the Board claims SB 357 **does** provide such access and is openly communicating to contractors that they will gain access to these sensitive records if the bill passes. This blatant contradiction confirms what we have feared all along: SB 357 is not just about programming – it is a calculated attempt to circumvent existing law and transfer sensitive, protected information to non-sworn, non-background-checked contractors.
 - This is not a procedural matter – it is a **profound violation of public trust and a direct affront to crime victims**. Juvenile records contain deeply personal and often traumatic information involving victims, witnesses, and offenders. The idea that private contractors – some of whom may have prior criminal affiliations – would be granted access to these files, outside the oversight of law enforcement and the courts, is unconscionable. Victims deserve more than vague reassurances – they deserve absolute protection. The County’s own admission that **“state government code amendments are needed”** to shift this authority away from trained probation professionals further proves that SB 357 is part of a broader agenda to dismantle existing statutory safeguards and civilianize the administration of juvenile justice. This bill is dangerous, unnecessary, and must be rejected.

2. “The County’s long-standing objectives [are] to decarcerate girls and gender-expansive youth, move more boys to less restrictive placements, and expand holistic, educational, and therapeutic services to the youth in our care.”

- The County’s assertion that SB 357 aligns with its “long-standing objectives to decarcerate girls and gender-expansive youth, move more boys to less restrictive placements, and expand holistic, educational, and therapeutic services” is not only misleading – it is completely detached from the current reality of LA County’s juvenile justice system. These objectives have already been achieved. The youth currently housed by the LA County Probation Department are 707(b) offenders – those charged with the most serious and violent crimes, including murder, armed robbery, and sexual assault. There are no low-level offenders left to “decarcerate.” To suggest otherwise is a political smokescreen that misrepresents the facts on the ground.
- This type of rhetoric may play well in public statements, but it is dangerously out of step with the actual composition of the youth population in our care. The County’s facilities are no longer populated by truants or petty offenders – we are housing high-risk individuals who require secure settings for the protection of the public, staff, and other youth. Pretending otherwise to justify the outsourcing of core safety responsibilities to untrained and unvetted civilians is not only irresponsible – it is reckless. Public safety policy must be grounded in facts, not slogans. “Department of Youth Development (DYD) reflects this vision: a commitment to preventative, rehabilitative, and developmentally appropriate services for young people, particularly those most impacted by systemic inequities.”

3. “Since its launch, DYD has demonstrated measurable success by diverting youth away from punitive systems, reducing recidivism, and improving educational and mental health outcomes through community-based partnerships and holistic, trauma-informed programming.”

- The County’s claim that DYD has “demonstrated measurable success by diverting youth away from punitive systems” is both misleading and factually incorrect. DYD does not determine which youth are incarcerated—the courts do. Judges, not DYD staff or programs, make the final call about detention based on the severity of the offense and the threat to public safety. If any youth have been successfully diverted because of effective programming, that’s an outcome to be applauded—but it does not validate the County’s overreach or justify legislative interference. Programming can and should continue without this bill, and without dismantling the infrastructure that ensures trained, sworn officers are in place to protect victims, youth, and the community.
- Let’s be clear: this legislation is not about diversion or better outcomes—it’s a **Trojan horse**. The real goal is to get the state to enact laws that de-unionize and civilianize probation, stripping trained peace officers of their responsibilities and handing critical public safety functions to unvetted civilians. The question of which County department should manage contracts with community-based organizations is already within the authority of the Board of Supervisors. No legislation is needed. This bill is a political maneuver, not a policy necessity, and it sets a dangerous precedent of undermining sworn officers and bypassing collective bargaining protections under the false guise of reform.

4. “DYD’s 2024 evaluation report revealed that 95 percent of youth enrolled in the program remained free from legal trouble, compared to approximately 20 percent of those who did not participate.”

- We applaud the work of DYD’s contractors and the positive outcomes they’ve achieved with youth enrolled in their programs. However, the County’s statistics are misleading and omit a critical fact: the vast majority of youth served by these programs are low-level offenders – not 707(b) youth charged with the most serious and violent crimes, such as murder, armed robbery, and sexual assault. Of course, these youth are less likely to reoffend; they were never comparable to the high-risk population currently in custody. Citing these numbers as justification for this legislation is intellectually dishonest and obscures the very different reality faced by sworn officers working with the most dangerous juvenile offenders.
- What is actually needed is not legislation – but leadership. Programming for high-risk youth can and should be expanded, and nothing in current law prevents the County from doing so. What’s missing is a safe and secure environment for community providers to deliver these services, which requires properly staffed, trained, and sworn probation officers on site. Instead of pushing a bill designed to civilianize and de-unionize the Probation Department, the County – and the State – should focus on investing in safety and infrastructure so that rehabilitative programming can succeed where it is needed most.

5. “SB 357 is designed to support the County’s shift toward a more developmentally appropriate and health- focused youth justice system by expanding the role of DYD while maintaining Juvenile Division Courts’ authority and the peace officer duties that only Probation’s POST-certified staff are able to perform.”

- We fully support a shift toward a more developmentally appropriate and health-focused youth justice system. In fact, probation officers have long advocated for a model that balances accountability with rehabilitation. But let’s be clear:

This evolution is entirely within the authority of the LA County Board of Supervisors – it does **not** require state legislation. SB 357 is unnecessary to achieve these goals and serves only to centralize power within DYD while sidestepping critical checks and balances, including union representation and professional training standards.
- The County’s claim that SB 357 “maintains” peace officer duties is a disingenuous distraction. The bill is not about enhancing care for youth – it’s about legislating a departmental power grab. If the Board truly wishes to expand DYD’s role or enhance programming, it already has the tools and the authority to do so today. What this legislation seeks to do is circumvent local governance, blur lines of accountability, and create a pathway to civilianize sworn law enforcement functions under the misleading guise of reform.

6. **“The bill does not alter the current relationship between the courts and Probation regarding recommendations about dispositions or conditions of supervision. Probation will continue to offer recommendations to the court as it does today.”**
- While it is accurate that SB 357 does not currently alter the relationship between the courts and Probation regarding recommendations for disposition or supervision, this statement conveniently ignores the larger truth: **many elements of SB 357 directly conflict with existing provisions of the Welfare and Institutions Code (WIC)**. This is not a minor legislative tweak – it is the first step in a broader, more radical effort to rewrite statewide law in ways that would undermine the role of sworn probation officers across California.
 - That is precisely why the Chief Probation Officers of California (CPOC) has taken the extraordinary step of opposing this bill. SB 357 is not just a local issue. If enacted, it will open the door to a sweeping redefinition of juvenile justice statewide – one that risks dismantling the very structure that ensures both accountability and safety in working with justice-involved youth. The County’s attempt to downplay the broader implications of this legislation is disingenuous. Make no mistake: this bill sets the stage for major statewide policy changes that will have lasting, destabilizing effects on probation departments across California.
7. **“This bill enables the County to enact and expand the goals of youth justice reimagined by allowing DYD to lead programming and supportive services, giving capacity to Probation deputies to focus on its primary duties of keeping all involved safe and secure.”**
- This statement is yet another example of the County misrepresenting the true purpose of SB 357. The Board of Supervisors already holds full authority to determine which County agency contracts with community-based organizations to deliver rehabilitative programming. That decision lies entirely within local jurisdiction and **does not require state legislation**. To suggest otherwise is misleading and indicative of a broader strategy to legislate authority that the Board already possesses.
 - SB 357 is not about empowering youth justice or creating capacity for probation officers – it is about fundamentally shifting control, eroding local labor protections, and circumventing established checks and balances. If the goal is truly to allow Probation to focus on safety while expanding rehabilitative programming, the Board can and should act accordingly through existing channels. This bill is unnecessary, and its existence raises serious questions about the County’s real intentions – chief among them, the **long-term effort to civilianize, de-unionize, and restructure juvenile justice without transparency or accountability**.

8. **“Over time, the County could place lower-risk youth in less restrictive, community-based placements under DYD oversight, while higher-risk youth would remain in secure facilities where Probation will ensure safety and DYD will deliver rehabilitative programming.”**

- The County’s claim that SB 357 would allow lower-risk youth to be placed in less restrictive, community-based placements is a **political smokescreen** that blatantly misrepresents the current reality. There are **no low-level youth offenders** left in LA County’s juvenile halls. The youth currently in custody are **707(b) offenders** – those charged with the most serious and violent crimes, including **murder, armed robbery, and sexual assault**. These are not candidates for “decarceration,” nor are they simply awaiting access to community-based programming. They are in secure facilities because the courts – based on the severity of their crimes and the threat they pose to public safety – have made that determination.
- The County’s vague suggestion that these high-risk youth could eventually be shifted to less restrictive placements raises deeply troubling questions. **Are they intending to appeal to the courts to release individuals charged with murder or rape back into the community under DYD oversight?** If so, that would represent a shocking disregard for judicial authority, public safety, and – most importantly – the rights and safety of victims. This statement underscores the danger of using SB 357 as a vehicle for quietly advancing a radical, unchecked agenda under the false banner of reform.

For all these reasons, we urge the Assembly Public Safety Committee to vote **NO** on Senate Bill 357 (Menjivar). This bill is not a thoughtful policy reform – it is a veiled attempt to upend the statutory balance that governs our juvenile justice system, sideline trained peace officers, and erode the rights of victims and the safety of our communities. It weaponizes political messaging to justify an unnecessary and dangerous shift in authority and victim’s rights, while ignoring the real progress already made within existing frameworks.

There is no legislative need for SB 357. The County already holds every tool it claims to seek through this bill. What it lacks is the political will to engage in transparent dialogue with the very workforce tasked with keeping our youth and our communities safe. We stand united – AFSCME, SEIU, and the sworn officers we represent – in firm opposition to this legislation. Public safety, victim protection, and due process must never be sacrificed for the sake of expediency or ideology.

Reject SB 357. Reject the politics of misdirection. Protect the integrity of California’s juvenile justice system and the rights of crime victims.

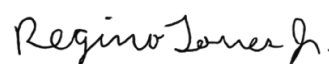
Sincerely,



Stacy Ford, President
Local 685 – AFSCME



Kathryn Beigh, President
Local 1967 – AFSCME



Regino Torres, Jr., President
BU 702 – SEIU 721 Joint Council

LA County Probation Department – Current Youth Programming*

PROVIDER	DESCRIPTION
Actors' Gang	Art program.
ADVOT-Arts & Music	Art program.
Affiliates and Offenders Recovery Program (AORP)	Life skills.
Affirmative Athletics	Sports Leagues, Journal Writing.
Alcoholics Anonymous Group	Life skills.
All New Foundation	Art program.
Alliance for Children's rights	Workshops for youth on Educational Advocacy.
Anti-Recidivism Coalition (ARC) - Arts Program	Art program.
Anti-Recidivism Coalition (ARC) - Credible Messenger Shift	Supporting youth and Probation staff in facilities.
Anti-Recidivism Coalition (ARC) - Healing Arts Program	Art program.
Anti-Recidivism Coalition (ARC) - Mentoring\Life Skills	Life skills.
Armory Arts	Art program
Arts for Healing and Justice Network - Dance and Dialogue	Art program.
Asian Youth Center	Conflict Resolution.
Asian Youth Center	Healing circles and mentoring.
Behavioral Management Program (BMP)	Special events and activities.
Bible Study - Archdioceses of Los Angeles	Faith Based Religious Services.
Bible Study - Chaplain Eagles	Faith Based Religious Services

LA County Probation Department – Current Youth Programming*

PROVIDER	DESCRIPTION
Boyle Heights Arts Academy (BHAC) - Live Studio Production	Vocational program.
Boyle Heights Arts Conservatory (BHAC) / Boyle Heights Arts Academy (BHAC)	Vocational program.
Catholic Mass Services-Archdioceses of Los Angeles	Faith Based Religious Services.
Center for Empowerment of Families	Art programs.
Changing How All Men Prepare for Success (C.H.A.M.P.S.)	Life skills.
College of the Canyons - College Courses	College Courses.
Community Excursion-RTSB	Excursions outside of the residential treatment center.
Creative Acts	Art programs.
Dance for Healing	Art programs.
Department of Mental Health (DMH) - Co-Occurring Disorder Psychotherapy-10-week program	Structured therapeutic programs.
Department of Mental Health (DMH) - Co-Occurring Disorder Psychotherapy-5 week	Structured therapeutic programs.
Department of Mental Health (DMH) - Co-Occurring Disorder Psychotherapy-Other Interventions	Psychoeducation.
Department of Mental Health (DMH) - Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)	Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT).
Department of Mental Health (DMH) - Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT)	Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT).
Department of Mental Health (DMH) - Group Psychotherapy -other interventions	Other Interventions.
Department of Mental Health (DMH) - Group Rehabilitation-other interventions	Other Interventions.

LA County Probation Department – Current Youth Programming*

PROVIDER	DESCRIPTION
Department of Mental Health (DMH) - Group Rehabilitation-Psychoeducation	Psychoeducation.
Department of Mental Health (DMH) - Life Skills	Life Skills.
Department of Mental Health (DMH) - Seeking Safety	Treatment.
Department of Rehabilitation Support Session	Education Services.
Diversity Hair Care	Vocational program.
East Los Angeles College - College Courses	College courses.
Gang Reduction and Youth Development (GRYD)	Education Services.
Give a Beat-Music Program	Art program.
Healing Dialogues and Action (HDA) - Healing Circles	Healing circles.
Healing Dialogue and Action (HDA) - Credible Messenger Shift	Supporting youth and probation staff in facilities.
Heidi Duckler Dance Class	Dance class.
Helpline Youth Counseling	Leadership development and skill building.
Hollywood Cinema Production Resources (HCPR)	Media arts mentoring.
Homeboy Arts Academy	Art program.
Hoops 4 Justice	Life skills and basketball training services.
ICYOLA	Music performance program.
InsideOut Writers (IOW) - Creative Writing	Art program.
Iron Man - Fitness Club Workshop	Sports program.

LA County Probation Department – Current Youth Programming*

PROVIDER	DESCRIPTION
Jail Guitar Doors	Art program.
LA County Probation - (AADAP) Asian American Drug Abuse Program	Gender expansive training services.
LA County Probation - Anchor Teams-Circle Up	Life skills discussions.
LA County Probation - Basketball	Sports program.
LA County Probation - Board Games	General.
LA County Probation - Book Club Program-Camp Rockey	Book club.
LA County Probation - Circle Up-Rehabilitative Programming	Life skills.
LA County Probation - Financial Literacy	Financial literacy.
LA County Probation - OSHA-10 Certification	Industrial education.
LA County Probation - Rehabilitative Life Skills	Life skills.
LA County Probation - The Rock Professional Car Detail Services	Vocational skills.
LA County Probation - Visiting	Visiting of family and court approved visitors.
LA County Probation - WORK PROGRAM	Vocational skills.
LA County Probation - Youth Council	Facilitated by the youth, with the supervision of the camp administration
LA County Probation-Camp Paige - CJP-Baseball Workshop	Sports program.
LACOE - Academic Bowl	All-subject academic quiz competition
LACOE - Culinary Arts Training at Camp Rockey	Vocational skills.
LACOE - Learning Loss Mitigation (SSI LLM)/Learning Reading Loss Program	Educational program.

LA County Probation Department – Current Youth Programming*

PROVIDER	DESCRIPTION
LACOE - LLM Math Tutoring	Building foundational skills in number sense, algebra, fractions, and geometry.
LACOE - MC3 CTE	Vocational skills.
LACOE/DMH - Good Vibe Gang	Life skills.
Living Advantage-Life Skills/Mentoring	Life skills.
Los Angeles Mission College - College Courses	College classes.
Los Angeles Rams (CBO-Sports Clinics and Character Chats) - Community Relations	Educational program.
Los Angeles Trade Technical College - College Courses Automotive-LA Trade Tech	Vocational skills.
Mental Health-Creative Expression Workshop (CrEW)	Life skills.
Mentoring a Touch from Above (MATFA)	Life skills.
Michael's Daughter Foundation	Animation & Film Services.
Million Little	Art program.
Mt. San Antonio College (Mt. Sac)	College courses.
Narcotics Anonymous	Narcotics Anonymous.
Paws for Life	General.
Pawsitive Change (Marley's Mutts)	General.
Personal Enrichment Training (P.E.T)	Educational Services - Work Program
Protestant Church Services-Chaplains Eagles	Faith Based Religious Services.

LA County Probation Department – Current Youth Programming*

PROVIDER	DESCRIPTION
PV Jobs	Vocational program (Construction Pre-Apprenticeship Pathway)
Return Home Mentorship	Life skills.
Rhythm Arts Alliance	Art program.
RKKPS, Inc.	Business Financial Literacy.
Rockey Dads	Parenting classes for young fathers.
Spirit Awakening	Art program.
Sports Challenge Workshop-LA County Probation	Athletic program.
Street Poets	Art program.
Studentnest	Tutoring Services.
Swan Within	Athletic program.
Tarzana Treatment Center	Substance Abuse Services
Theatre of Hearts/Youth First	Art program.
Tia Chucha's Centro Cultural	Art program.
Unusual Suspects Theatre Company	Art program.
UpRising Yoga	Athletic program.
UPS (United Parcel Services)	Vocational program.
Urban Strategies (US) Project	Life skills.
Versa Style	Art program.

LA County Probation Department – Current Youth Programming*

PROVIDER	DESCRIPTION
West Los Angeles College	College courses.
WestCal Academy Vocational Services	Vocational program.
Wolf Connection	Life skills.
WonderSeed Foundation	Life skills.
Write Girl/Bold Ink Creative Writing	Art program.
Young Visionaries Youth Leadership Academy	Secure the B.A.G. Educational Workshops