



COALITION OF L.A. PROBATION UNIONS

Date: June 15, 2026

To: Governor Gavin Newsom
California Attorney General Rob Bonta
The Honorable Members of the California Legislature
California State Auditor
District Attorney Nathan Hochman
Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors

From: Curis Chambers, President, L.A. County Deputy Probation Officers Union,
AFSCME Local 685
Reggie Torres, President, Supervising Deputy Probation Officers Union,
Teamsters Local 986

Re: Senate Bill 577 (Laird) – The Need for Due Process and Reform Following
Revelations Concerning Los Angeles County's \$4 Billion AB 218 Settlement

On behalf of the L.A. County rank and file and supervisory probation peace officers represented by AFSCME Local 685 and Teamsters Local 986, we write to bring to your attention alarming new developments concerning Los Angeles County's approximately \$4 billion settlement of claims brought under Assembly Bill 218.

As reported in the attached June 11, 2026, *Los Angeles Times* article, Los Angeles County District Attorney Nathan Hochman has informed the court that he believes as many as four out of every five claims alleging sexual abuse in county-run and country-contracted juvenile halls, foster homes and the former McClaren Hall may be fraudulent. The District Attorney has requested a six-month stay of payments while his office conducts a criminal investigation into plaintiffs, attorneys, and others involved in the claims process.

We do not offer these facts to diminish the suffering of legitimate survivors. To the contrary, true victims deserve justice, accountability, and compensation. Those who committed abuse should be held fully accountable for their actions.

However, these revelations underscore the very concerns our union has raised from the outset: **the process itself lacked adequate safeguards, meaningful investigation, and fundamental due process.**

Billions of taxpayer dollars were committed without depositions, without evidentiary hearings, and without independent scrutiny sufficient to distinguish legitimate claims from potentially fraudulent ones. Active and retired employees from multiple County departments, including Probation, the Department of Children and Family Services, and the Department of Public Social Services, were effectively denied the opportunity to review, challenge, or respond to allegations before their reputations and careers were irreparably harmed.

As recent events have demonstrated, the absence of due process does not merely harm accused employees. All County unions have been told that the settlements have decimated the County's budget, making cost of living adjustments in a time of severe inflation virtually impossible. Critically, it also harms legitimate survivors whose claims become intertwined with unsupported or fraudulent allegations. In the end, everyone suffers when the integrity of the process itself is compromised.

For more than a year, public discourse surrounding the settlement has broadly portrayed County employees – including probation officers – as participants in widespread institutional misconduct. Yet many dedicated public servants were never accused individually, never interviewed, and never afforded even the most basic opportunity to defend their names. **Their reputations have been falsely maligned..**

The consequences extended far beyond damage to individual employees. Numerous probation officers were removed from the workplace and remained off duty for periods approaching three years while allegations were investigated. The loss of experienced personnel further exacerbated already severe staffing shortages within the juvenile halls and camps, resulting in diminished programming, reduced rehabilitative services, increased mandatory overtime, and unsafe conditions for both youth and staff. Youth in custody suffered from fewer opportunities for treatment, education, and positive engagement, while employees who remained were required to work under increasingly dangerous and unsustainable conditions. **The absence of due process did not merely affect the accused; it had profound consequences for the very young people the juvenile justice system is intended to serve.**

The emerging evidence raises difficult but unavoidable questions. If the District Attorney is correct that a substantial percentage of claims are fraudulent, then innocent employees and retirees have suffered unjust damage to their names and legacies. Taxpayers have been exposed to enormous liability. Most tragically, legitimate survivors may now face increased skepticism because insufficient safeguards failed to separate truth from fabrication.

Justice requires more than good intentions. It requires facts. It requires transparency. It requires due process.

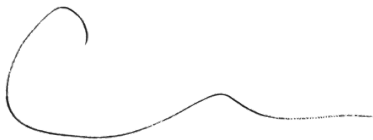
Assembly Bill 218 was enacted with noble intentions. But recent events demonstrate that important reforms are necessary to preserve confidence in the system while protecting the rights of survivors and ensuring fairness for those accused. Senate Bill 577 (Laird) is taking on these reforms. As such, we respectfully urge the Legislature to carefully consider reforms that include:

- Independent verification standards for large-scale historical claims;
- Enhanced judicial oversight before mass settlements involving taxpayer funds are approved;
- Strong anti-fraud protections;
- Transparency in claim review methodologies;
- Appropriate due process protections for accused individuals; and
- Safeguards that preserve both accountability and fairness.

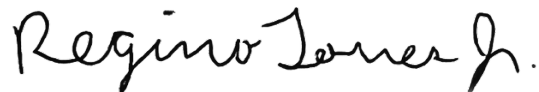
Survivors deserve justice. Taxpayers deserve accountability. Public employees deserve due process.

These principles are not mutually exclusive.

Sincerely,



Curtis Chambers, President
L.A. County Deputy Probation Officers Union
AFSCME Local 685



Regino Torres, Jr., President
Supervising Deputy Probation Officers Union
Teamsters Local 986

cc: Willie Pelote, Matthew Siverling, and Matt Broad, Advocates

Los Angeles Times

L.A. County D.A. claims four in five cases in \$4-billion sex abuse payout may be fraudulent



L.A. County Dist. Atty. Nathan Hochman is asking a judge to pause most payments in the \$4-billion sex abuse payout. (Gary Coronado / Los Angeles Times)

By Rebecca Ellis
June 11, 2026 9:01 AM PT

- Dist. Atty. Nathan Hochman is asking a judge to pause payouts for six-months as he investigates “significant” allegations of fraud
- The request has outraged victims, who say their claims have already withstood rigorous vetting

Los Angeles County’s district attorney says he believes 4 in 5 claims in the largest sex abuse settlement in U.S. history may be fake — a claim that dwarfs previous assumptions over the scale of fraud within the \$4-billion payout.

Dist. Atty. Nathan Hochman has asked the judge overseeing the bulk of the sex abuse cases to pause payments for six months while he continues his sprawling criminal investigation into the plaintiffs, lawyers and therapists behind the claims.

Distributing the money now, he argues, will hamper his investigation “by complicating witness cooperation [and] obscuring financial trails.”

The county agreed in April 2025 to pay \$4 billion to settle more than 11,000 claims of sexual abuse arising from county-run juvenile halls, foster homes and a notorious children’s shelter. The claims, many of which dated back decades, came after California changed the statute of limitations to give victims who were sexually abused as children a new window to sue.

Seven months after the payout was announced, the D.A.'s office opened an inquiry, spurred by claims that some plaintiffs made up stories of abuse and were never in county custody. Times investigations found nine people who said they were paid small amounts of cash by recruiters to sue the county for sex abuse in juvenile halls. Four of them said they fabricated the claims.

Hochman's pause, if granted, would apply only to the abuse cases stemming from juvenile halls, which make up the bulk of the lawsuits, and not the cases arising from foster care or the children's shelter. Lawyers in the case are expected to go before Superior Court Judge Lawrence Riff on Monday for a hearing on the request.

The D.A.'s request Wednesday for another six-month delay unleashed an immediate backlash among victims, who had expected to receive their payments earlier this year and have grown weary of repeated delays. Some have taken out high-interest loans against their settlement, which are eating up a greater percentage of their payout with each passing year.

The abuse they suffered at the hands of county employees, they worry, has now taken a backseat to a series of fraud allegations.

"They're beyond frustrated," said attorney Patrick McNicholas, whose firm represents roughly 1,000 clients. "Once again, they're getting victimized."

He noted the payments are spread out over five years, which he argues would give prosecutors ample time to do their investigation without worrying billions will be given to fraudsters.

The claim that more than 80% of the more than 11,000 claims of abuse could be fraudulent has drawn skepticism among some victims and attorneys, who say the number far surpasses what anyone had expected. Hochman did not explain in his court filing how he arrived at that figure.

"I would love to know where they're getting these numbers from," said Karlina Howard, who sued the county over abuse she experienced as a child at MacLaren Hall, a children's shelter now infamous for predatory staff.

Howard said that since the fraud allegations surfaced in the fall, many victims have been pressed by the county's lawyers to buttress their claims of abuse. But they say the lack of records in the decades-old cases combined with the fact they were children at the time of the abuse has made it an impossible task, putting real victims at risk of being labeled fraudsters.

"Who was I supposed to tell? This is staff, and then they tell you, 'If you tell anybody, you'll never see your family again,'" she said. "We're scared, we're children, and we're in a facility that looks like a jail."

Since the revelations that some plaintiffs were paid to sue, the county has ramped up the vetting process for claims, appointing a former presiding judge of the county's Superior Court to vet cases by Downtown LA Law Group, one of the main firms involved in the cases. The law firm represented all nine of the clients The Times spoke with who said they were paid to sue the county.

Downtown LA Law Group, or DTLA, has vehemently denied paying any of its clients to sue. The firm is also under investigation by the State Bar, which is pushing to comb through its roughly 2,700 plaintiffs in the sex abuse settlement.

But Hochman indicated in his court filing that he did not believe any of the myriad inquiries underway compared with what his office could accomplish.

"The prior and ongoing vetting by other agencies and entities has been insufficient to determine whether the claims are fraudulent," he stated.