



COALITION OF L.A. PROBATION UNIONS

March 16, 2026

The Honorable Sharon Quirk-Silva
California State Assembly
1020 N Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Assembly Bill 2419 – Body-Worn Cameras in Juvenile Facilities
SUPPORT IF AMENDED

Dear Assemblymember Quirk-Silva:

On behalf of the Los Angeles Probation Officers' Union, AFSCME Local 685, and the Supervising Deputy Probation Officers, Teamsters Local 986, representing L.A. County probation officers and supervisors, we write to express our support for AB 2419, if amended.

First and foremost, it is imperative to understand that the Los Angeles County Probation Department is being asked to deliver a modern, trauma-informed rehabilitation model with shamefully outdated facilities and dangerously thin staffing. Years of warnings from oversight agencies, media reports, and frontline employees have made clear that chronic underinvestment, not the workforce, has driven many of the system's current failures. Our unions have repeatedly called upon the County, as well as the Legislature, to invest in modern facilities to address these shortcomings. The reality is that staffing shortages, deteriorating infrastructure, and aging facilities continue to undermine both youth rehabilitation and staff safety.

Key issues that require immediate funding include:

- **Critical staffing shortages.** The California Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) identified inadequate staffing as a central problem in its 2022 report. Although the L.A. County Board of Supervisors authorized the hiring of 125 new Detention Services Officers and Group Supervisors, hiring and training delays have left facilities understaffed for years. We are currently operating with a 28 percent vacancy rate.
- **Excessive workloads and operational breakdowns.** Media reports in 2023 documented officers working extended shifts to cover vacancies, leading to staff burnout and operational failures such as canceled classes, programs, and activities that youth depend on for rehabilitation.
- **Severely deteriorating facilities.** Facilities including Central Juvenile Hall, Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall, and the Dorothy Kirby Center are aging and in significant disrepair, making it difficult to meet state requirements for a safe, "homelike," trauma-informed environment.

- **Infrastructure needed for Secure Youth Treatment Facilities.** Federal law requires sight-and-sound separation between youth under 18 and the older population housed in Secure Youth Treatment Facilities. The County's current facility layout makes compliance extremely difficult without major infrastructure investment.

Los Angeles County cannot expect safe facilities or successful rehabilitation outcomes without making long-overdue investments in staffing and infrastructure. Meaningful funding is essential to stabilize operations, protect staff, and give justice-involved youth the environment and programming they need to succeed.

Our unions urge any resources or investments contemplated by the State intended for the County Probation Department or juvenile justice programs to first prioritize our critical staffing needs and unsafe conditions fueled by dilapidated facilities.

However, our members do understand the public's expectation for transparency and accountability inside juvenile facilities. Probation officers already work in environments that are heavily monitored by fixed cameras in housing units, hallways, classrooms, and other common areas. But if the Legislature believes body-worn cameras provide an additional layer of transparency, our members are prepared to work constructively toward implementation.

However, **transparency and accountability must apply to everyone inside these facilities**, not just the staff responsible for maintaining safety and order.

Juvenile and Secure Youth Treatment facilities (SYTF) house minors and young adults whom the courts have determined cannot safely remain in the community. By way of example, charges of pre-disposition youth housed at Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall as of 4/25/2025 include:

- 35% - Murder or attempted murder
- 28% - Serious property and theft-related felony offenses
- 19% - Serious firearms and weapons-related felony offenses
- 9% - Violent assault and battery offenses

SYTF youth and young adults are individuals adjudicated for California's most serious and violent juvenile offenses listed in Welfare and Institutions Code §707(b), including crimes such as murder, attempted murder, rape by force, robbery, and assault with a firearm.

Thus, it is no surprise that assaults on probation officers occur regularly, and assaults between youth remain a serious safety concern. The officers and supervisors we represent go to work each day knowing they may be punched, kicked, or otherwise assaulted while trying to maintain safety and stability inside these facilities.

If body-worn cameras are going to document these incidents, that footage should not be used solely to scrutinize staff response. It should also be used to **ensure accountability for violent conduct occurring inside the facility.**

If officers are going to be equipped with body cameras in juvenile facilities, we fully expect an increase in performative or defiant behavior by youth aware they are being recorded. This dynamic could increase the risk of confrontation and potential injury to staff.

For this reason, we respectfully request amendments to ensure body-worn camera footage is used to evaluate and address serious incidents involving:

- Youth-on-staff assaults
- Youth-on-youth assaults

When a serious incident occurs, the review process should examine the entire event, including the probationer's conduct that led to the use of force, not simply the actions of the officer responding to the situation.

Specifically, we propose amendments requiring that when body-worn camera footage captures a significant youth-on-staff assault, the reviewing use-of-force committee must also evaluate the youth's conduct and initiate a criminal investigation where appropriate.

In addition, if body-worn cameras are to become part of the operational framework, the policy must recognize the well-established scientific and psychological realities associated with high-stress critical incidents. When officers are involved in violent or rapidly unfolding events, particularly when they are being assaulted, the body's stress response can affect memory formation. Adrenaline, elevated heart rate, and cognitive narrowing during a critical incident can make it difficult for any individual to recall the exact sequence of events immediately afterward. This phenomenon is widely recognized in neuroscience and is often referred to as the "fog of war."

For this reason, we respectfully request an amendment allowing probation officers involved in a use-of-force incident to **review relevant body-worn camera footage prior to submitting an official use-of-force statement.**

Allowing officers to review the footage will improve the accuracy and completeness of reports by allowing them to reconcile their recollection with the objective recording of the event. The purpose of body-worn cameras should be to strengthen the factual record, not to create discrepancies between human memory and video evidence that may be misinterpreted as dishonesty. Providing officers the opportunity to review the footage supports transparency, promotes accurate documentation, and ensures that investigative findings are based on the most reliable reconstruction of events available.

Additionally, the Legislature should address an unintended consequence in the Secure Youth Treatment Facility framework codified in California Welfare and Institutions Code Section 875. Under current law, the court sets a youth's baseline term of confinement based on the "most serious recent offense." When a new offense occurs in custody, such as an assault on staff, there is concern that the new adjudication could replace the original baseline offense when the court recalculates the term.

This structure can create a perverse incentive not to file new charges for in-custody assaults because doing so may reset the framework rather than add accountability.

To address this issue, the statute should be clarified to ensure that **offenses committed while a youth is confined are additive and do not replace the original baseline offense used to determine the term of confinement**. Specifically, the Legislature should:

- Add language to Section 875 clarifying that in-custody offenses do not replace the offense used to establish the baseline term.
- Allow courts to impose additional or consecutive confinement terms for serious in-custody offenses, including assaults on probation officers or facility staff.
- Clarify within the progress review provisions that conduct occurring while confined cannot become the new “most serious recent offense” for purposes of recalculating the baseline term.

This approach mirrors the structure used in the adult criminal system, where the base offense determines the primary sentence and enhancements, such as assaults on staff, are added consecutively. The amendment would preserve the original sentence while ensuring meaningful consequences for new violence occurring inside juvenile facilities.

Finally, we respectfully request that AB 2419 be amended to ensure the **policy applies statewide** rather than solely to Los Angeles County. If body-worn cameras are considered a best practice for transparency and accountability, that policy should apply uniformly to probation departments across California.

Limiting the requirement to one county creates inconsistent standards for staff safety, accountability, and operational policy across the state’s juvenile justice system. It also risks placing Los Angeles County at a disadvantage in recruiting and retaining probation officers if one jurisdiction operates under significantly different requirements than others. With the Los Angeles Probation Department already facing significant vacancy rates, policies that further complicate hiring and retention should be carefully considered.

A statewide policy would ensure consistent expectations for officers, youth, and administrators throughout California’s juvenile justice system.

With these amendments, we believe AB 2419 can advance transparency while also recognizing the safety realities faced by the frontline workforce responsible for operating juvenile facilities.

For these reasons, we respectfully request that AB 2419 be amended, and we look forward to working with you to improve this legislation.

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