



## COALITION OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY PROBATION UNIONS

**Local 685 – AFSCME**

*Hans Liang, President*

**Local 1967 – AFSCME**

*Deborah Lares, President*

**BU 702 – SEIU 721 Joint Council**

*Jim Schoengarth, President*

September 8, 2022

Chair Holly J. Mitchell  
Supervisor, Second District  
County of Los Angeles  
500 West Temple Street, Room 866  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

### **RE: Response to Chair Mitchell’s Statement on Addressing the Crisis at Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall**

Dear Chair Mitchell:

Thank you for taking the time to visit Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall to see first-hand the dangerous housing and working conditions following our coalition’s August 16<sup>th</sup> rally for safety. We share your commitment to rehabilitation, healing, and growth for these 707(b) justice-involved youth and see that for many of these youth, probation – coupled with the rehabilitative services from the County professionals and private sector providers with whom we partner – is their last chance before incarceration.

Nevertheless, in June 2022, there were 150 reports of youth-on-youth assaults in L.A. Probation facilities. The good news is that the vast majority of these fights were broken up by Detention Services Officers (DSOs) before turning into gang-on-gang riots. **The bad news is that 26 DSOs were personally assaulted by the youth that month when doing their job.**

We would like to provide some clarification to points you made in your public statement dated August 23, 2022:

#### **RE: The Crisis at Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall**

On February 9, 2022, we sent you a letter requesting support for our invitation to Governor Newsom to visit L.A. County Probation juvenile facilities, specifically in reference to our request for State funding to build a Secure Youth Treatment Facility (SYTF) and Probation Training Academy, crucial to the success of the Board’s care-first, trauma informed therapeutic model. We copied you and your colleagues on the detailed request that outlined clearly what you have now put out to the press – that **Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall (as well as the other juvenile probation facilities) are Dickensian in every way and will not serve the Board’s goals.** We are not aware of a response from you; nor did you join Supervisors Barger and Hahn in supporting the request.

#### **Welfare and Institutions Code Section 707(b)**

Adjudications that fall within WIC Section 707(b) include:

- Murder
- Arson
- Robbery
- Rape
- Sodomy
- Kidnapping
- Torture
- Carjacking

**RE: Moving Youth from Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall to Campus Kilpatrick.**

In our professional opinion, moving 707(b) youth to Campus Kilpatrick as it is currently constructed is dangerous for the youth, staff, and treatment providers. Further, Malibu and other municipalities have filed lawsuits challenging the Board's action to move youth that have been convicted of serious felonies without a showing of a "safety plan" and its impact on the community.

The Board of Supervisors authorized \$53 million in taxpayer funding to remodel Campus Kilpatrick into a state-of-the-art campus environment with a college setting for the County's new "L.A. Model," a therapeutic care-first approach to rehabilitating low-level justice-involved youth. The facility was subsequently remodeled for youth to live in a dormitory-like setting with other similarly situated youth, closer to their families, communities, churches, schools, vocational training, and community-based support groups. Although your Board ordered substantial renovations of Campus Kilpatrick to create a safe environment for 707(b) youth, those renovations have not occurred and will ultimately take several months. Further, your Board has been provided with information that Probation Camp Operations (RTSB) are not ready to function as a Secure Youth Treatment Facility (SYTF) and that months of work is needed to make these facilities safe for SYTF youth.

In summary, moving 707(b) youth to a non-secure cottage setting such as Campus Kilpatrick is not safe and will result in increased youth-on-youth violence, possibly lead to further assaults, and may even result in the death of a youth, staff member, or treatment provider. Simply put, **moving 707(b) youth to Campus Kilpatrick to an open cottage is like pouring gasoline on fire and using staff as water to put that fire out.**

**RE: Reducing the Carceral Footprint**

We have consistently advocated for investment in renovations to existing, and creation of new, facilities that support your Board's priorities. Properly designed, constructed, and furnished facilities are crucial to:

- Meet the requirements of SB 823 and SB 92, which transferred responsibility for justice-involved youth and young adults from the State Department of Juvenile Justice to California Counties; and
- Protect the public and honor the rights of victims of crimes, including but not limited to those included in Welfare and Institutions Code Section 707(b).

Regardless of these undeniable policies and moral imperatives, your Board has failed to invest in – or seek State funding to invest in – infrastructure or major remodeling of Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall or Central Juvenile Hall, allegedly because modernizing existing facilities is not in the current Board majority's plan to "reduce the carceral footprint" of the L.A. County Probation Department. Here are the facts:

- The Board could have addressed the physical layout of the compound at Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall but failed to act.
- The lack of on-site resources and antiquated living conditions is a reflection of your Board's inaction.
- The extraordinary needs of 707(b) youth (those convicted of murder, arson, robbery, rape, sodomy, kidnapping, and carjacking, for example) can best be addressed if your Board invests in providing better services and outcomes through professionalizing the juvenile halls and recognizing the staff – rather than demonizing them – for the experience and education.

**Death of a Thousand Cuts**

As the representatives of more than 4,000 Probation Department probation-peace officers, we are deeply concerned that the current Board majority is pushing a “death of a thousand cuts” agenda that:

- Endangers the multidisciplinary team that services the justice-involved youth, including Probation and County staff, LACOE educators, and private sector service providers;
- Threatens the Probation Department’s mission; and
- Exposes the County of Los Angeles, and thus the taxpayers, to significant liability and damages.

**Enough is enough – the Board of Supervisors must take immediate and drastic steps to protect the officers and youth in our care.**

Sincerely,



Deborah Lares, Director  
President, Professional Managers Assoc.  
Local 1967, AFSCME, AFL-CIO



Hans Liang, Deputy Probation Officer II  
President, L.A. County Deputy Probation Officers Union  
Local 685, AFSCME, AFL-CIO



Jim Schoengarth, Supervising Deputy Probation Officer  
President, Los Angeles County Supervising Probation Officers’ Union  
BU 702 – SEIU 721 Joint Council, AFL-CIO

cc: Supervisors Barger, Hahn, Kuehl, and Solis  
Justice Deputies  
Fesia Davenport, Chief Executive Officer  
Adolfo Gonzales, Chief Probation Officer  
State Office of Youth and Community Restoration  
Ron Herrera, President, Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO

Attachments:

1. Letter to BOS dated 2/9/22
2. Letter to Governor Newsom dated 1/27/22
3. SYTF Pilot Project Campus Vernon Kilpatrick Conceptual Agreement and Framework
4. Letter to Tim Pescatello dated 8/29/22