



February 14, 2024

Linda Penner
Chair, Board of State and Community Corrections
2590 Venture Oaks Way
Sacramento, CA 95833

RE: Request for Immediate Determination of Unsuitability of Los Angeles County Juvenile Detention Facilities

Dear Chair Penner:

This letter is submitted to you today on behalf of the Liberation Fund, which comprises 10 organizations dedicated to ending the incarceration of girls and gender-expansive youth in Los Angeles County. As Liberation Fund partners, we work cross-collaboratively to address the root causes of incarceration unique to girls and gender-expansive youth, including housing instability, sexual and physical violence, child welfare involvement, and the school-to-prison pipeline.

Today, we advocate for those individuals whose voices are often unheard, those directly impacted by the criminal justice, youth justice, and child welfare systems, survivors, as well as the parents and families who tirelessly support them. For them, these issues are of dire urgency.

It is imperative that the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) find Los Padrinos and Barry J Nidorf Juvenile Halls unsuitable TODAY.

When it comes to the safety of California's children, every single child deserves protection and the full realization of their rights. There should be no exceptions or discrepancies in the State's duty to safeguard them. Specifically, the State bears a profound responsibility for the well-being of children under its care in state-funded institutions like juvenile camps and halls, where they are incarcerated, fed, and educated. We urge you to consider beyond mere convenience, cost, bureaucratic processes, or external pressures, and to take decisive and comprehensive

action on behalf of the countless children and young people whose lives and welfare depend on your actions or inaction.

Since 2021, there has been well-documented non-compliance in Los Angeles County's juvenile halls, a matter known to local and state decision-makers, including the BSCC. Despite this awareness, little progress has been made, and timelines have been repeatedly extended, seemingly to accommodate the requests for leniency from the LA County Probation Department. This situation is unacceptable and condemnable, and as you know, goes beyond issues of compliance and exposes minors to direct harm. Instead, we implore you to extend leniency to the young individuals who have suffered this harm, abuse, and neglect within the very institutions that are meant to rehabilitate California's children and give them a second chance at integrating into society.

Act now to leverage the full weight and power of local partner organizations, allies and advocates who stand ready to fight for and serve LA's children and help implement the corrective action plan outlined in [Youth Justice Reimagined](#).

Youth Justice Reimagined lays out a vetted and comprehensive plan based on the collective experience of a robust and diverse network of experts that includes community-based organizations, philanthropic and academic institutions, as well as government agencies, including the LA County Board of Supervisors, and the Departments of Public and Mental Health. It is time to stop relying on LA Probation, who has been given ample opportunities to prove the efficacy of their interventions, and instead insist that LA County prioritize community alternatives that are rooted in public health, youth development and racial equity. The safety of our young people far outweighs the need to grant additional requests to LA County Probation for yet more time and a second, third or fourth chance to get it right.

There is a long-standing inability demonstrated by LA County Probation to come into compliance, despite being provided time and time again to correct identified issues and rise to meet minimum requirements continuously raised by the BSCC. Their time is up. In conjunction with dozens of local partners and allies, the Liberation Fund stands ready to work alongside the Los Angeles Department of Youth Development to execute solutions outside of probation and halls to support the young people of Los Angeles. We represent a collective of case managers, legal aid providers, family reunification specialists, court advocates, housing and placement alternatives, arts, healing, and wellness experts, among others. We are poised and ready to serve young people in environments and with wrap-around support networks that position them for economic and academic success, stability, safety, and care.

We are relying on strong leadership by the BSCC to act boldly to ensure local detention facilities in Los Angeles are deemed *unsuitable* for California’s children and take swift and necessary measures *now*.

As part of your final consideration, the abuse brought to your attention is not new nor exclusive to Los Padrinos and Barry J Nidorf Juvenile Halls. There is a deep and troubling history in Los Angeles child serving institutions, not only in the juvenile justice system but also our child welfare system, resulting in *thousands* of California children sounding the alarm. More than 3,800 young people have come forward with allegations of harsh physical and sexual abuse by government paid staff. And these are only reported, counted cases. Despite official reports, LA County has tolerated unchecked abuse in its facilities, and yet, egregiously staff have remained in place continuing to work with young people for years after accusations persist. The BSCC must find this intolerable. Too many California children who are system involved in Los Angeles County are crying out for help and we raise their voices to you today. We implore you, find these halls unsuitable and shut them down NOW. There is no other acceptable solution.

Sincerely,

Liberation Fund Partners



CC:

Senate President pro Tempore Mike Miguire	Senator Nancy Skinner, Senate Budget Chair
Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas	Assembly Member Kevin McCarty, Assembly Public Safety Chair
Los Angeles Legislative Delegation, Members	Board of State and Community Corrections, Members
Senator Aisha Wahab, Senate Public Safety Chair	Director Katherine Lucero, Office of Youth and Community Restoration