



February 14, 2024

To: The Board of State and Community Corrections

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Local 148  
612 S Broadway  
Floor 4, Office #518  
Los Angeles, CA, 90014

local148@local148.org

[Local148.org](http://Local148.org)

The Los Angeles County Public Defenders Union (Local 148) Board of Directors submits this letter in regards to the board meeting hosted by the Board of State and Community Corrections in Sacramento on Thursday, February 15, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. We write to you with grave concerns as public defenders responsible for juvenile defense in Los Angeles.

As presented in the Board's Notice to the Probation Department, the staffing conditions have reached a breaking point, creating a dangerous and inhumane culture at the juvenile detention facilities. Our youth report that probation officers not only allow fights to take place, but also encourage fighting between the youth. When fights get out of hand and probation officers finally intervene, probation insists that the District Attorney's Office charges our clients with more crimes, instead of addressing the issues caused by understaffing.

Our youth also report uninhabitable conditions at the hall—extremely cold and extremely hot water in the shower, no proper cleaning procedures after pepper spray is deployed, and freezing temperatures at night.

With inadequate staffing and inadequate programming, the juvenile halls are dangerous and undermine the fundamental purpose of juvenile justice: rehabilitation.

All of our youth who are detained pretrial are housed at Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall. We have also visited Los Padrinos for attorney visits and see the mismanagement first-hand. Every youth detained pretrial was moved to Los Padrinos in June of 2023. Only in December of 2023 were interview pods placed in the chapel that, for the first time, provided for confidential attorney-client meetings. The wait times for doctors and other experts to interview our clients grew so long that many experts refuse to evaluate our clients at Los Padrinos.

The Los Angeles Times reported in August of 2023 that probation has nearly \$100 million in unspent funds. The Los Angeles County Probation Department has shown time and time again that it is incapable of safely detaining our youth or contributing to the mission of rehabilitation within the juvenile justice system.

These facilities need to be shut down so that these funds can be used for services that our youth desperately need in Los Angeles—drug rehabilitation and mental health treatment centers. We urge you to find these halls unsuitable today.

Sincerely yours,

Local 148 Board of Directors