

Dear California Board of State and Community Corrections,

My name is Eden Chang and I am a member of the Education Justice Coalition. The Education Justice Coalition is a group of youth advocacy organizations with expertise in education law, programming, and youth development, informed by the lived experiences of our clients and formerly incarcerated colleagues. We are writing to express our deep concerns about the conditions in Central Juvenile Hall and Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall, and urge that you vote to close them. Simply providing another extension to submit a corrective plan will fail to address many of the issues that have been present at these facilities for decades.

One of our main concerns regarding these facilities is that they have failed to meet the most basic educational needs of the youth housed there. This is especially concerning given that many youth are placed in these facilities due to concerns related to their education. Youth are entitled to a quality education and yet many of them have been continuously unable to meaningfully access it while detained. We are particularly concerned that youth in these facilities have historically been given "packets" to complete on their own, with little regard for grade level, special education needs, or whether they have already completed that same packet, rather than receiving direct instruction from a teacher that is appropriate given their needs. Further, young people and their families report, and the limited data available demonstrates, a lack of access to A-G courses and consistent special education and related services. Youth deserve an education in a comprehensive school, surrounded by their peers, and supported by active engagement from teachers and support personnel. Instead, as is evident from the BSCC investigation of the facilities, young people regularly miss school, and even when they are present, receive little to no actual instruction.

The poor state of the Juvenile Halls in Los Angeles County is the result of ongoing, systemic issues. It is abundantly clear that the problems faced by the youth in these facilities are not solely due to current staffing crises. The Probation Department has a long history of failing to provide consistent access to education and programming to detained youth. The continuous cycle of lawsuits, settlements, investigations and the consideration of this decision before us today is proof of this. Simply, creating plans to increase the probation staff cannot address these deep-rooted issues. We do not have confidence that the education plan proposed in BSCC corrective action plan can meet these needs or address these longstanding concerns.

In light of these concerns, we urge you to close Central Juvenile Hall and Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall and to release those youth housed there to the greatest extent possible. We ask you to invest in community-based alternatives to incarceration that provide young people with the support and resources they need to thrive. Youth currently housed in these facilities need support, guidance, and equitable education within their communities, not segregation and punishment that further exacerbates their already challenging circumstances. We need to reimagine youth justice, rather than reinforce a system that has repeatedly failed to nurture and rehabilitate our most vulnerable population of young people. Upon closure of the halls, we ask that you consider repurposing the facilities for alternative use like the 24-hour youth centers in alignment with Youth Justice Reimagined.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Eden Chang

The Education Justice Coalition:

ACLU Foundation of SoCal

Arts for Healing and Justice Network

Alliance for Children's Rights

Children's Defense Fund-CA

Youth Justice Education Clinic at Loyola Law School