

Los Angeles County Deputy Probation Officers' Union
AFSCME LOCAL 685



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April 27, 2020

VIA Email & US Mail

Sachi A. Hamai, Chief Executive Officer
County of Los Angeles
Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street, Room 713
Los Angeles, California 90012

Re: California Penal Code Section §830.5 (a)
Request for Law Enforcement Exemption from Hiring and Promotion Freeze, Curtailments, and Budget Reduction – For First Line Responders

Dear Ms. Hamai,

On behalf of the membership of the Deputy Probation Officers Union, AFSCME Local 685, we write in support of the Board of Supervisors' legislative efforts to secure funding from the State of California and the Federal Government to stave off a potential \$2.2 billion dollar budget deficit related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the concomitant loss of vital County services and programs. Local 685 has directed our resources and legislative team to work in partnership with AFSCME International, labor groups across the Country, and the County's legislative delegation, to make our collective voices heard in Sacramento and Washington D.C.

By this letter, Local 685 also requests that the Board of Supervisors provide a narrowly tailored exemption to the hiring and promotional freeze and impending budget reductions for Bargaining Unit #701 first responders. Our members work on the front lines as first responders in the juvenile halls and probation camps, in Probation field offices supervising juvenile and adult probationers (including AB 109 PSPs), and in the critical Pre-Trial Services of the Probation Department.

The overwhelming majority of our members are Deputy Probation Officers and peace officers under California Penal Code § Section 830.5 (a) where their authority extends to any place in the state while engaged in the performance of their peace officer duties including:

- Conditions of probation, mandatory supervision, post-release supervision, or post release community supervision.
- Transportation of persons on probation, mandatory supervision, or post supervision.
- Rendering aid and protection to other law enforcement agencies.

- Violations of any penal code provisions of law that are discovered while performing the usual or authorized duties.

Under the unprecedented conditions of the current COVID-19 pandemic, Juvenile Hall officers continuously work to disperse the detained minors among sufficient open units to maintain safe physical distancing for the minors in our care. Camp Officers have arranged their supervision of minors in facility footprints that allow for safe physical distancing. Field Deputy Probation Officers have been redeployed to the Juvenile Halls and Camps to ensure that the Probation Department has sufficient staffing to spread minors throughout Units and facilities not only for physical distancing, but more critically to maintain vital services for the minors in our care. For example, due to the COVID-19 situation, Local 685 members are stepping into make-up for programming and education resources that have been curtailed.

The Local 685 leadership and Probation Management meet virtually every day to address staff deployment, health and safety issues, and programming for minors and staff. In partnership with the Probation Department, our Officers work to insure daily nurse reviews for all detained minors, our Officers are carefully screened before coming on shift, and our facilities are being consistently cleaned and disinfected to protect the health and safety of our minors and staff. Overall, Local 685 can point to evidence that minors in the care of the Probation Department are safe in Probation facilities.

Due to this labor-management partnership, the Probation Department has not reported a single juvenile ha testing positive for the Coronavirus while in a County institution or camp. Working as first responders, seventeen (17) of our bargaining unit members have tested positive for COVID-19, while another 47 are under mandatory quarantine under the DPH's contact tracing procedures.

L.A. County Probation Officers are critical to the delivery of juvenile and adult services in the County. The specialized knowledge, skill, and experience of Probation first line responders will be needed as the COVID-19 pandemic conditions continue in the County for several months. It simply is not safe or advisable to release high-risk juvenile offenders into the community at large during the health pandemic. Now, more than ever, the emergency conditions and related demands that have to be met to continue to ensure the safety of juveniles and employees requires the County to have adequate staff that can present a first-line of defense and protection.

Local 685's Executive Board is committed to working in partnership with Chief Leyva for a narrowly tailored exemption from the hiring and promotional freeze, and from any potential curtailment or furlough of positions in our bargaining unit. We also continue our pledge to work with the Board of Supervisors and your office to meet the critical need for County services and programs.

Sincerely



Hans Liang,
President, AFSCME Local 685

C: Each Board Member
Ray Leyva, Interim Chief Probation Officer