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**DRAFT**

December 6, 2010

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## **RIDLEY-THOMAS TO INTRODUCE MOTION TO REDUCE YOUTH RECIDIVISM IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY**

*Seeking Better Model for Re-Entry for 20,000 Probation Youth*

**Los Angeles** -- Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas will submit a slate of recommendations to the Board of Supervisors tomorrow aimed at reducing recidivism among Los Angeles County youths transitioning out of Department of Probation custody. The recommendations were released last week with Marian Wright Edelman, founder of the Children's Defense Fund.

"This study gives us a road map to reform. Our probation system in Los Angeles County has become a pipeline to prison for too many youths," said Supervisor Ridley-Thomas. "It's time we enact bold yet common-sense measures to salvage the lives of these young men and women and save society the tremendous cost of supporting a prison-bound generation."

Los Angeles has the nation's largest probation system, with 20,000 youths on probation and 2,000 in custody at the Department of Probation's camps and halls. Latinos and African Americans make up a disproportionate segment of the County juvenile camp population: 60% of youths in custody are Latino, and 25% are African American.

Supervisor Ridley-Thomas commissioned a report earlier this year to study Los Angeles County's juvenile recidivism rate and explore strategies to prevent youths from re-offending. The report, "Juvenile Reentry in Los Angeles County: An Exploration of the Strengths, Barriers and Policy Options," was authored by Michelle Newell and Angelica Salazar, then of the Harvard Kennedy School of Government and now of the Children's Defense Fund.

The study highlights several obstacles to successful re-entry in the Probation Department's current model, including: faulty planning for a youth's release, resulting in failure to promptly enroll in school or receive necessary medications or mental health treatment; shortage of adequate drug treatment, mental health care, school support and job training; and insufficient gang intervention programs.

The report calls for a series of reforms, including:

- Better coordination of pre-release planning among County departments, such as Probation and Mental Health;
- Expansion of gang intervention programs;
- Stronger enforcement of existing Probation policies, from recordkeeping requirements to supervision of probation officers;
- Possible expansion of a pre-release assessment program, currently in pilot phase in two of the nineteen Probation youth camps.

Supervisor Ridley-Thomas' motion calls for the County's Chief Executive Officer, Chief of Probation, Director of the Department of Mental Health, and Director of the Department of Health Services to report back to the Board of Supervisors by January 10, 2011.

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