



OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

HALL OF JUSTICE

ALEX VILLANUEVA, SHERIFF



November 24, 2021

The Honorable Board of Supervisors
County of Los Angeles
383 Kenneth Hahn of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Supervisors:

**DEMAND FOR EQUAL TREATMENT OF COUNTY EMPLOYEES ASSIGNED TO
THE COUNTY'S SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT AS WELL AS RESPONSIBLE BOARD
FINANCING OF SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT MANDATES**

This correspondence is in response to your Chief Executive Officer's October 4, 2021, letter notifying the Sheriff's Department (Department) that your Board will rescind the hard hiring and spending freeze for every County department with the exception of the Department despite the fact that it closed the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021, with a net County cost SAVINGS in excess of \$182 million.

As you recall, I inherited a budget which closed the 2017-2018 fiscal year with an approximate \$20 million deficit. With growing structural budget deficits, the annual budget shortfall ballooned to \$101 million during the next FY 2018-2019, prompting the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and your Board to approve the unprecedented motion to remove \$143.7 million from the Department's daily operational budget, which severely stymies the flexibility to procure necessary routine services and supplies in an efficient manner. Worth noting is the Department has historically been forced to realize a substantial savings in the budgetary categories of Services and Supplies and Capital Assets in the ongoing struggle to address or offset the underfunding in Salaries and Employee Benefits; thus, further deferring the procurement, maintenance, and replacement of end-of-life supplies, equipment, technology, and infrastructure needs.

Subsequently, the Department made a conscious effort to reduce its budget shortfall the following fiscal year from \$63 million to \$35 million at the close of the FY 2019-2020 despite the ongoing lack of CEO funding to address non-controllable, unfunded employee benefit increases and inflated revenue collection targets.

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For FY 2020-21, in addition to the continuing withhold of the aforementioned \$143.7 million in operating funds, the Department's budget was cut by eight percent, or \$145 million, with the bulk of the cut coming from the Custody budget unit in the hopes of sustaining the short-lived reduced jail population related to the implementation of COVID-19 safety protocols. With the increase in population back to near pre-COVID levels and detainee care responsibilities on the rise, the Department is in no position to reduce its Custody staffing to match the number of Custody budgeted position cuts – which resulted in the loss of over 1,000 budgeted positions, approximately 500 of which were filled with Custody personnel who are now encumbering budgeted positions assigned to units outside of custody, and thus impacting other operations elsewhere throughout the Department, including Detective and Patrol.

Despite these impairments and the challenges presented by County budget policy, the Department closed its most recent FY 2020-2021 annual budget with a SAVINGS in excess of \$182 million. Clearly, the Department has demonstrated fiscal accountability as evidenced by the reduction in its overtime expenditures by roughly \$100 million from the prior fiscal year, while also addressing emerging needs such as administering COVID-19 vaccinations to our medically homebound County residents, eradicating illegal cannabis operatives, and triaging the homelessness population. Yet and still, the CEO and your Board continue to questionably withhold the Department's \$143.7 million operating funds for the third fiscal year in a row.

Moreover, in your October 5, 2021, action, your Board rescinded the hard hiring freeze for every County department with the exception of the Department. At this point, such prolonged actions, coupled with the exhausting CEO micro-management of budget operations, appears to be malicious – particularly impacting your fellow County-family women and men, sworn and civilian, of the beloved Department. In fact, I question the legality of your Board restricting hiring and the movement of my personnel as I deem necessary by denying the Department unmonitored access to the Countywide electronic human resources information technology management system. At present, your unrelenting hiring freeze on the Department has limited the number of academy trainee classes. As a direct result, the shortage of available deputy personnel is causing the Department's patrol service compliance level to fall below its contractual obligations in multiple contract cities and unincorporated areas of the County.

The truth is a hiring freeze is counterproductive in that when the Department is not allowed to hire custody assistants, higher-paid deputy costs are incurred. When the Department is not allowed to hire new lower-paid deputies, higher-paid bonus deputy costs are incurred. With respect to civilian personnel, lower-level duties are performed by higher-level personnel. What is worse, 17,099 fellow County employees assigned to the Department are denied the same opportunities of advancement and prosperity made available to their counterparts working in any other County department.

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Your October 1, 2019, Board motion and your CEO's recent October 4, 2021, letter require the Department to submit a mitigation plan to be approved by your CEO and your Board. In past attempts, your CEO and Board did not approve of a Department reduction in services provided to Parks and Recreation or a consolidation of Patrol station operations. Given the significant rise in serious crime and the alarming homicide rate, the Department cannot curtail its Detective operations as such action would be a gross disservice to our County victims and their families. And contrary to popular demand, the Department refuses to reverse course in providing the appropriate level of care to individuals remanded to our County custody facilities and in maintaining compliance with the Department of Justice, Los Angeles County Superior Court, and custody monitor settlement agreements. Care first must be at or near the top of the County's list of priorities. Please join me in ensuring this is achieved for those individuals that remain in our care with no other viable options readily available to them.

As long as your CEO and your Board continue to fail to reimagine long-held, stranglehold budgetary practices including but not limited to; 1) outmoded CEO policies such as non-allocation of cost-of-living-adjustment allocations for overtime or Workers' Compensation medical costs, 2) non-allocation of available/surplus Assembly Bill 109 Custody-related revenue, 3) non-allocation of growing available net County cost resources available as a result of increases in Public Safety Augmentation Fund dollars, and 4) non-allocation of funding to appropriately address mandated Custody programs, the Department will continue to face an uphill struggle to meet its Board-approved, under-funded budget allocation with each new fiscal year.

Any real, fair, and just mitigation plan should undoubtedly include an influx of County funding to the Department to rightfully address its ongoing unfunded mandated obligations. The time is now to invest in your County employees assigned to the Department to ensure they have the resources needed to appropriately and sufficiently serve the residents of Los Angeles County. Your failure to do so may result in outcomes that collectively could have been avoided.

Thank you for your consideration. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at [REDACTED]

Sincerely,


ALEX VILLANUEVA
SHERIFF