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March 31, 2025

The Honorable Jesse Arreguin
Chair, Senate Public Safety Committee
1020 N Street, Room 545
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: SB 357 (Menjivar), Probation and youth treatment delegation – OPPOSE

Dear Senator Arreguin,

I am writing on behalf of the Kern County Board of Supervisors to express our strong opposition to SB 357 (Menjivar), which seeks to authorize the board of supervisors in any county to delegate all or part of the duties and authorities concerning minors—currently entrusted to probation departments and probation officers—to another county department.

Probation has long been a cornerstone of the juvenile justice system, serving both juveniles (ages 12-17) and emerging adults (ages 18-24) adjudicated for offenses ranging from minor misdemeanors to serious and violent felonies. The effectiveness of the juvenile justice system is directly tied to the specialized roles and responsibilities carried out by probation. By overseeing the full continuum of care, Probation is uniquely positioned to implement prevention, intervention, and deflection strategies that prioritize rehabilitation while maintaining public safety. These efforts, combined with extensive training and research-based approaches, allow Probation to focus on keeping youth safely within their communities when appropriate while reserving detention for those who pose a genuine risk to public safety. When detention is necessary, it must be managed by professionals trained in both rehabilitative and safety practices. Probation's role is critical in balancing the needs of youth, families, the community, the county, and ultimately the courts, ensuring that youth receive individualized rehabilitation plans while maintaining necessary safeguards.

Kern County's Probation Department has extensive training and experience in evidence-based approaches to working with youth, young adults, and adults. We are deeply concerned about the potential consequences of SB 357, including its impact on community safety, service coordination at the county level, collaboration with the courts, and the ability of the justice system to function effectively. Additionally, shifting these responsibilities to non-probation departments would create operational challenges for recipient agencies and disrupt services for the vulnerable populations they serve.

Similar to the concerns raised by AB 946 (Brayn), which proposes to transfer probation responsibilities to a youth development-focused department in large counties, SB 357 raises serious questions about the potential erosion of the probation system statewide. Both bills seek to shift fundamental public safety functions away from trained probation professionals, threatening the continuity of services, weakening established safeguards, and disrupting the delicate balance between rehabilitation and accountability.

This bill raises significant questions about its implications for community safety, local coordination among agencies, workforce training requirements, fiscal impacts, and the implementation of state policies governing the juvenile justice system. The disruption of existing structures could weaken essential public safety services and hinder the ability to provide appropriate supervision and treatment for youth.

For these reasons, Kern County strongly opposes SB 357. We urge you to consider the long-term ramifications of this bill and its potential to undermine the effectiveness of probation services that are fundamental to public safety and youth rehabilitation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Leticia Perez', with a stylized, cursive script.

Leticia Perez, Chair
Kern County Board of Supervisors

cc: Honorable Members, Senate Public Safety Committee
Honorable Members, Kern Legislative Delegation
Shaw Yoder Antwih Schmelzer & Lange