



May 19, 2020

Via Electronic Delivery

The Honorable Sydney Kamlager-Dove
California State Capitol
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0054

RE: Principles of Probation Reform

Dear Assemblymember Kamlager-Dove:

The American Conservative Union Foundation supports efforts to place meaningful restrictions on probation and parole terms as means to promote public safety, save taxpayer dollars, and allow probation officers do their jobs more effectively by making their caseloads more manageable. The principles contained in your probation reform proposal aligns well with those goals.

California's adult supervised probation population is staggering, with about 548,000 individuals under the watch of the state. This population is the largest of any state in the nation, more than twice the size of the state's prison population, almost four times larger than its jail population and about six times larger than its parole population.

A 2018 Justice Center of the Council of State Governments [study](#) found that a large portion of people violate their terms of probation and end up incarcerated as a result. The study revealed that 20 percent of prison admissions in California are the result of supervised probation violations, accounting for the estimated \$2 billion spent annually by the state to incarcerate people for supervision violations. This means nearly eight percent of people incarcerated in a California prison – roughly 10,000 people – are behind bars solely for supervised probation violations. Not new crimes, most violations are [technical](#) and minor in nature, such as missing a drug rehab appointment or socializing with a friend who has a criminal record.

Probation – originally meant to reduce recidivism – has become a pipeline for re-entry back into the justice system. The current system designed to nitpick for failure is denying second chances to people who need them, plunging California deeper in debt, and driving up the state's incarcerated population.

[Research](#) by the California Budget & Policy Center shows that probation services, such as mental healthcare and addiction treatment, are most effective during the first 18 months of supervision. Research also indicates that providing increased supervision and services earlier reduces an individual's likelihood to recidivate, making us all safer as a result. As such, a proposal to reduce the

maximum probation period for misdemeanor offenses to one year and for felonies to two years is backed by data.

A shorter, intensive, term of probation, allowing for an increased emphasis on services, would lead to improved outcomes for people on misdemeanor and felony probation while reducing the number of people returning to jail and prison for minor slip-ups. Your approach would put California on the forefront of data-based probation reforms, making communities safer and the justice system more effective.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Patrick Plein', with a stylized, cursive script.

Patrick Plein

Policy Analyst

The American Conservative Union Foundation

Nolan Center for Justice