

## ASSEMBLY THIRD READING

AB 2257 (Hart)

As Amended April 15, 2026

Majority vote

**SUMMARY**

Authorizes a county board of supervisors (BOS) to establish a department of corrections and rehabilitation, to be headed by an executive officer appointed by the BOS, to assume the sheriff's duties under California law pertaining to the county jail.

**Major Provisions**

- 1) Clarifies, for purposes of the authority of a BOS of any county to establish a department of corrections to be headed by an officer appointed by the board, that the established department must be a department of corrections and rehabilitation, and the officer appointed by the board must be an executive officer.
- 2) Specifies that a county department of corrections and rehabilitation may employ peace officers, as specified.
- 3) Requires a BOS that exercises its authority to establish a department of corrections and rehabilitation to set forth its reasons for establishing the department, which may include, but are not limited to, any of the following findings:
  - a) A department of corrections and rehabilitation will better protect public health and safety.
  - b) There has been a disproportionate increase in deaths within the county jail.
  - c) There is persistent unequal treatment of individuals within a protected class under the Unruh Civil Rights Act.
  - d) A department of corrections and rehabilitation will provide better administration or operation of the county jail.
  - e) There has been persistent abuse or disregard of the civil and human rights of individuals within the county jail.
  - f) There has been a violation of a federal decree or settlement relating to institutional punishment and rehabilitation.
  - g) County jail operations have failed to adhere to Title 15 of the California Code of Regulations, regarding crime prevention and corrections.
  - h) The county jail failed to secure accreditation by one or more national corrections associations.
- 4) Provides that if a BOS exercises its authority to establish a department of corrections and rehabilitation, the executive officer appointed by the BOS shall meet all of the following qualifications:

- a) Either have professional experience in corrections management or extensive familiarity with Title 15 of the California Code of Regulations, regarding crime prevention and corrections, and national standards for jail accreditation.
  - b) Extensive familiarity with the requirements of appropriate medical and mental health care within a corrections setting.
  - c) Demonstrated commitment to protecting the civil and human rights of incarcerated individuals.
  - d) Knowledge of best practice and evidence-based approaches to rehabilitation.
- 5) Provides that if a BOS exercises its authority to establish a department of corrections and rehabilitation, the executive officer appointed by the board shall assume a sheriff's duties established in California law, as specified, pertaining to a county jail.
  - 6) Specifies that the executive officer must ensure that personnel, including peace officers, working in a county jail, industrial farms, and fire or road camps, meet all minimum requirements and are assigned in compliance with the law.
  - 7) Provides that the provision of existing law that requires the sheriff to take charge of and be the sole and exclusive authority to keep the county jail and the incarcerated persons in it, as specified, does not apply to a county that has established a department of corrections and rehabilitation, as described above.
  - 8) Specifies that it is the intent of the Legislature that this bill does not require a change in workforce at the county jail, industrial farms, and fire or road camps, and that existing peace officers working in those facilities may maintain their status as peace officers.

## COMMENTS

### **According to the Author**

"California's county jails are in crisis. Jail deaths are at record highs. People with mental illness languish without adequate care. Staffing shortages persist, while financial mismanagement threatens essential public services.

"Since the passage of Senate Bill 911 in 1993, elected sheriffs have held sole and exclusive authority over the operation of county jails. At the same time, county boards of supervisors have remained legally obligated to fund those jails — without authority to compel needed changes. With their policymaking authority ending at the jail door, boards of supervisors are put in the position of writing blank checks while jail issues persist. AB 2257 will reintroduce local choice over jail administration and encourage collaboration and accountability. If a sheriff-run model is serving the community well, it should continue. If not—and particularly in the face of longstanding issues—a board of supervisors should have the authority to evaluate and pursue a structure that better serves the community. Whether counties act to change their jail governance systems or not, having a second option raises the incentive for all parties to improve jail operations and management."

**Arguments in Support**

According to *Smart Justice California*, AB 2257 "would give counties the option to maintain sheriff-run jails or appoint an official other than the sheriff to operate the county jail system, if warranted by the need for improved jail operations and administration. This bill restores local choice in jail governance – a flexibility counties had prior to 1993. This bill also updates existing Government Code section 26605 language for consistency with today's practice...

"AB 1185 (McCarty - 2020) granted counties the authority to oversee sheriff's departments and to investigate matters within their jurisdiction. This authority has been largely underutilized or otherwise severely obstructed in a way that defeats its limited purpose.

"Providing county boards of supervisors the option of removing jail operations from the Sheriff serves as an alternative solution in addressing California's jail crisis. When left to the sheriff's sole discretion, jail issues have persisted across many counties in California for far too long.

"California needs smarter solutions for the myriad problems plaguing its jails. This bill moves California forward in providing counties an option for advancing elected sheriff accountability and much needed improvements in operating county jails. In-custody jail deaths are at record highs. Many local governments are struggling with this crisis and the public is frustrated with the lack of accountability and answers. Many families are left devastated by the sudden and unexplained death of a loved one in custody.

"This bill provides county governments with greater leverage to advance jail policy changes aimed at saving lives and safeguarding taxpayer dollars. While this bill does not require counties to change their jail governance structure, it does encourage accountability and results by ensuring that county leaders have local discretion to ensure safe, effective and responsible jail operations."

**Arguments in Opposition**

According to the *Association for Los Angeles Deputy Sheriffs*, AB 2257 "proposes to create a process to shift oversight and jurisdiction of county jails from the elected county sheriff to an appointed executive officer appointed by a Board of Supervisors.

"AB 2257 implicitly advances a policy direction that could undermine the long-standing statutory authority of the sheriff to maintain custody and control of county jail facilities. California law has historically recognized the sheriff as the sole and exclusive authority responsible for the county jail and the prisoners within it, a structure that promotes clear accountability, operational efficiency, and public safety.

"Creating a separate department of corrections opens the door to shifting jail operations away from the sheriff and toward politically appointed administrators who may lack the training, experience, and operational perspective necessary to safely manage custodial facilities. Jail operations involve complex security, medical, classification, and rehabilitation responsibilities that require experienced sworn leadership and clear lines of command.

"In large jurisdictions such as Los Angeles County, where jail facilities house thousands of inmates and staff, introducing new bureaucratic layers or governance structures risks fragmentation of authority and confusion regarding responsibility for safety and operations. Rather than improving transparency or accountability, this structural change could weaken it.

"ALADS believes that any proposal to fundamentally alter jail governance should involve extensive consultation with the deputies and custody personnel who operate these facilities daily and bear the responsibility for maintaining safety for staff, inmates, and the public."

## **FISCAL COMMENTS**

Unknown. This bill is keyed non-fiscal by the Legislative Counsel.

## **VOTES**

**ASM PUBLIC SAFETY: 5-3-1**

**YES:** Schultz, Mark González, Haney, Harabedian, Sharp-Collins

**NO:** Alanis, Lackey, Ramos

**ABS, ABST OR NV:** Nguyen

## **UPDATED**

VERSION: April 15, 2026

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FN: 0002398