

SENATE THIRD READING
SB 423 (Smallwood-Cuevas)
As Amended September 02, 2025
Majority vote

SUMMARY

Establishes the Local Handcrew Pilot Program (LHPP) in the County of Los Angeles.

Major Provisions

- 1) Establishes the Local Handcrew Pilot Program (LHPP).
- 2) States that the Los Angeles County Fire Chief (LACFC) may enroll in the LHPP formerly incarcerated individuals who have successfully completed one or more of the following:
 - a) The California Conservation Corps (CCC) program crew;
 - b) Relevant programming at Camp David Gonzales; or
 - c) Work at an institutional firehouse.
- 3) Establishes that the LHPP shall operate for five years.
- 4) Permits the LACFC to end the LHPP before it has operated for five years.
- 5) States that if the LACFC establishes the LHPP, the LACFC shall do all of the following:
 - a) Develop metrics for evaluating the efficacy and success of the program;
 - b) Evaluate the efficacy and success of the program using the developed metrics; and,
 - c) Report the findings of the evaluation to the Legislature and the Governor.
- 6) Provides that the LACFC shall submit the LACFC report to the Legislature and Governor within 42 months of establishing the LHPP and upon conclusion of the program.
- 7) States that if the LACFC ceases the LHPP, the LACFC shall submit a report to the Legislature and the Governor explaining the reasons for ceasing the program's operations based on the developed metrics.
- 8) Establishes that the LHPP shall not replace or restrict existing or future programs and training offered to formerly incarcerated individuals, nor displace, replace, or reduce currently employed firefighters, handcrew personnel, or other existing positions in the County of Los Angeles Fire Department.
- 9) Establishes that the LHPP shall become operative only upon an appropriation by the Legislature for the purposes of the program.
- 10) Defines "fire chief" to mean the fire chief of the County of Los Angeles Fire Department.
- 11) Defines "program" to mean the Local Handcrew Pilot Program.

- 12) Makes findings and declarations.
- 13) Makes other technical and nonsubstantive changes.

COMMENTS

According to the Author

"SB 423 acknowledges the tremendous skill and sacrifice of incarcerated firefighters by ensuring they have enhanced access to the academic courses, certifications, and programming that lead to real opportunities upon release. For too long, the state has exploited our incarcerated fire crews putting them in harm's way with little opportunity for employment upon release. SB 423 expands our states commitment to our incarcerated fire crews by ensuring they receive the supports they need to be better prepared to continue their service to the state, after their time has been served. In doing so, SB 423 will help the state fill our critical public safety needs, reduce recidivism, and offer our most deserving individuals a path to a meaningful career."

Arguments in Support

According to *Initiate Justice Action*, "The bill is a necessary step in establishing equitable opportunities for formerly incarcerated individuals who have served on fire crews while incarcerated to continue building meaningful careers once they return home.

"Over the past few years, approximately 3,500 justice-involved individuals have served on state fire crews annually, according to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). These individuals risk their lives combating wildfires, protecting our communities, and acquiring essential emergency response skills. Yet, upon release, they often face significant barriers in obtaining the licenses, certifications, and recognition needed to pursue firefighter and related public-safety roles.

"By creating a formal pipeline (pending amendment, to be administered by CalHR and the State Personnel Board) to establish civil service preference points, SB 423 provides increased integration for justice-involved applicants into hiring pools. SB 423 also creates a Community Reinvestment Fund which transfers calculated labor cost savings from incarcerated crews into a fund supporting reentry services, mental health, Workforce and Development programs and other administrative functions.

"Moreover, SB 423's aims to reduce barriers and increase opportunities and access to portable and standardized curriculum, workforce development programs, vocational training, and much needed post-release support services. Through collaboration with state and local agencies, private Cadet Academies and local community colleges, SB 423 ensures that all incarcerated firefighters can begin working towards securing essential experience and certifications before they are released. Research cited by CDCR indicates that stable employment can reduce recidivism by as much as 32%, underscoring the vital role of consistent, comprehensive training and job placement programs in preventing reoffense."

Arguments in Opposition

None on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee, "Cost pressures (General Fund) of an unknown but potentially significant amount to fund the pilot program. Depending on the scope of operations, these costs pressures could be in the hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars annually for the duration of the pilot program."

VOTES**SENATE FLOOR: 39-0-1**

YES: Allen, Alvarado-Gil, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Choi, Cortese, Dahle, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Grove, Hurtado, Jones, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNERney, Menjivar, Niello, Ochoa Bogh, Padilla, Pérez, Richardson, Rubio, Seyarto, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Strickland, Umberg, Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

ABS, ABST OR NV: Reyes

ASM PUBLIC SAFETY: 9-0-0

YES: Schultz, Alanis, Mark González, Haney, Harabedian, Lackey, Nguyen, Ramos, Sharp-Collins

ASM NATURAL RESOURCES: 13-0-1

YES: Bryan, Alanis, Connolly, Ellis, Flora, Garcia, Haney, Hoover, Kalra, Muratsuchi, Pellerin, Schultz, Zbur

ABS, ABST OR NV: Wicks

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 11-0-4

YES: Wicks, Arambula, Calderon, Caloza, Elhawary, Fong, Mark González, Ahrens, Pacheco, Pellerin, Solache

ABS, ABST OR NV: Sanchez, Dixon, Ta, Tangipa

UPDATED

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