



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

1600 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ROOM 335, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92101-2470

AGENDA ITEM

DATE: January 25, 2022

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

ADDRESSING ANTICIPATED SHORTAGES OF PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS IN THE SAN DIEGO REGION (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

Regional law enforcement agencies, including the San Diego County Sheriff's Department and the City of San Diego Police Department, are expected to face a dire shortage of sworn officers necessary to protect life and property in the next few years. Staffing shortages and recruiting challenges for these agencies are increasing as violent crime is surging. Housing shortages and high housing costs have contributed to these personnel shortages as many law enforcement professionals are unable to live where they work. Only twenty-seven percent of City of San Diego police officers live in the City of San Diego.¹

During the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, local law enforcement personnel put themselves in harm's way by continuing to serve on the front lines to protect our communities. Some of these officers and deputies are now at risk of losing their jobs due to government-mandated vaccination requirements. The recent decision by the San Diego City Council to fire City of San Diego police officers who choose not to receive a COVID-19 vaccination is expected to result in the firing of at least 160² of the City's 1,982 sworn officers with another 478³ requesting exemptions. The burden of having an understaffed department will lead to burnout, injury and post-traumatic stress on the remaining officers, creating a cascading effect of more staffing shortages over time. These compounding factors will certainly make it more difficult for the City of San Diego to reach its 2013 five-year goal of 2,128 sworn officers.⁴

¹ [Unaffordable housing has SD police officers commuting 120+ miles daily \(10news.com\)](https://www.10news.com/story/news/politics/2021/01/20/unaffordable-housing-has-sd-police-officers-commuting-120-plus-miles-daily/7071175002/)

² [Some 160 SDPD officers could face termination unless they comply with vaccine mandate - The San Diego Union-Tribune \(sandiegouniontribune.com\)](https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/story/news/politics/2021/01/20/some-160-sdpd-officers-could-face-termination-unless-they-comply-with-vaccine-mandate/7071175002/)

³ [San Diego issues dozens of termination notices to employees who didn't comply with vaccine mandate - The San Diego Union-Tribune \(sandiegouniontribune.com\)](https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/story/news/politics/2021/01/20/san-diego-issues-dozens-of-termination-notice-to-employees-who-didnt-comply-with-vaccine-mandate/7071175002/)

⁴ [20-21 analysis of the police departments fiscal years 2021 budget complete rpt.pdf \(sandiego.gov\)](https://www.sandiego.gov/files/assets/2021-2022/2021-2022%20Budget%20Complete%20Rpt.pdf)

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Considering that San Diego County has recently experienced a fourteen percent surge in violent crime, the difficulty in retaining and recruiting deputy sheriffs is of particular concern.⁵ The annual Sheriff deputy attrition rate has increased fifteen percent during the past two years while applications have decreased twenty-five percent during the past year and decreased thirty-six percent between 2018 and 2021. Adding to this is a recent string of “smash and grab” crimes occurring in San Francisco, Los Angeles and even in our own county – in National City.⁶ The County of San Diego must be prepared to protect residents and business owners from these harmful acts as these types of crimes continue to increase.

The Sheriff’s Department provides law enforcement to nine incorporated cities as well as the vast unincorporated area. The Sheriff’s Department also plays an important regional role serving as the Regional Mutual Aid Coordinator. Under this role, deputies respond to assist cities during times of need, and have done so in response to civil unrest and riots occurring in El Cajon and La Mesa. Deputies assist if called upon by other law enforcement agencies to help with emergency evacuations and the Sheriff’s Department supports both incorporated and unincorporated areas of the County through regional services such as the crime lab, arial support to regional law enforcement agencies (ASTREA), special enforcement detail, bomb/arson, property and evidence, and search and rescue missions.

With the need for maintaining law enforcement and emergency response capabilities greater than ever, it is imperative that the Board of Supervisors authorize the Chief Administrative Officer to work with the Sheriff to develop recommendations to ensure that the San Diego County Sheriff’s Department has the personnel to protect life and property in San Diego County, as prescribed by California Government Code section 26600, et seq. Those sections state, in relevant part, that the Sheriff shall preserve peace, investigate public offenses, and arrest those who have committed public offenses.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

SUPERVISOR JOEL ANDERSON AND SUPERVISOR JIM DESMOND

In anticipation of regional public safety officer shortages, and in light of the Sheriff’s Department role as Regional Mutual Aid Coordinator, direct the Chief Administrative Officer to work with the Sheriff and return to the Board in 180 days or as soon as practical with updates and recommendations related to recruitment, planning, and funding strategies that support the Sheriff’s Department having the critical sworn and non-sworn personnel necessary to protect San Diego County’s incorporated and unincorporated residents in accordance with California Government Code Sections 26600-26602 and under the Law Enforcement Mutual Aid System.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Public safety is of the utmost importance for all communities and all county residents. Strong relationships between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve are imperative to

⁵ [SANDAG Report: San Diego County sees rise in violent crime during 1st half of 2021 - \(kusi.com\)](https://www.kusi.com/news/sandag-report-san-diego-county-sees-rise-in-violent-crime-during-1st-half-of-2021)

⁶ <https://www.cbs8.com/article/news/crime/national-city-police-investigating-smash-and-grab-jewelry-kiosk-plaza-bonita-mall-san-diego-county-robbery-theft/509-c20c5b55-9a68-48e3-bb07-16f2540c51d9>

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maintaining public safety. Ensuring equitable access to law enforcement is necessary to reduce disparities in unserved and underserved communities. Inadequate law enforcement most negatively impacts those in the lower socioeconomic strata of society and communities of color. Ensuring that law and order is maintained protects the most vulnerable in society.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with today's recommendations. There may be future fiscal impacts associated with future recommendations. Any such recommendations would return to the Board for approval.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

Safe communities enable a robust business climate and greater economic prosperity.

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

N/A

BACKGROUND

The last two years have brought broad change to law enforcement and department policies across the country. In addition, there has been a decline in public trust in law enforcement. This distrust, along with the increasing risks of the job, have made it harder to recruit enough qualified candidates at law enforcement academies. A record number of law enforcement personnel are also retiring or simply quitting the profession altogether. This activity compromises public safety and necessitates action by the Board of Supervisors to ensure the continuance of law and order in our region.

In 2019, the International Association of Chiefs of Police published the results of a survey of their members in a report, "The State of Recruitment: A Crisis for Law Enforcement." The report found that seventy-eight percent of the responding agencies were having difficulty recruiting qualified candidates, sixty-five percent reported having too few candidates, and fifty percent reported changing their policies to attract qualified candidates.

A June 2021, survey conducted by the Police Executive Research Forum, reported a twenty-six percent drop in hiring rates by midsized police departments, while larger departments, with 500 or more officers, reported a thirty-six percent decrease.⁷

Closer to home, a survey conducted by the San Diego Police Officers Association in September 2021, found that approximately ninety percent of San Diego Police officers surveyed oppose vaccine mandates and that forty-five percent would rather be fired than comply.⁸ In light of these statistics and the Sheriff's responsibility to protect life and property as described in state law, we recommend that the Board authorize the Chief Administrative Officer to work with the Sheriff to determine any actions needed as it relates to recruitment, planning, and funding strategies that support the Sheriff's Department.

⁷ [WorkforceSurveyJune2021 \(policeforum.org\)](https://www.policeforum.org/workforce-survey-june-2021)

⁸ [Survey: Police who'd rather quit than follow vaccine mandate - Los Angeles Times \(latimes.com\)](https://www.latimes.com/news/nation/la-na-police-2021-09-15)

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LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

Today's proposed action supports the Operational Excellence Initiative of the County of San Diego's 2021-2026 Strategic Plan by making health, safety and thriving a focus of all policies through internal and external collaboration and pursuing policy and program change for healthy, safe and thriving environments to positively impact residents. It also supports the Living Safely Initiative by making San Diego the safest urban county in the nation through planning, building and maintaining safe communities to improve the quality of life for all residents.

Respectfully submitted,



JOEL ANDERSON
Supervisor, 2 District



JIM DESMOND
Supervisor, 5 District

ATTACHMENT(S)
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