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## **CDAA Applauds the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Plan to Support Victims at Lifer Parole Hearings**

*District Attorney Gascón's [Special Directive 20-14](#) institutes the "default policy ... that we will not attend parole hearings."*

February 4, 2021—In a [video](#) released today, the California District Attorneys Association (CDAA) applauds Los Angeles County Sheriff Alex Villanueva and his support of crime victims with his announcement that the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) will attend parole hearings to represent the victims in place of Los Angeles County deputy district attorneys.

In a [letter](#) to Los Angeles County District Attorney George Gascón, Sheriff Villanueva wrote, "We believe [it] is important to give a voice for the voiceless and keep our commitment in good standing in support of those who have been victimized by violent crime ... I cannot understand why your office is barring prosecutors from attending parole hearings."

He added, "[I]f prosecutors will no longer be allowed to attend parole hearings, the LASD will attend ... in the absence of your prosecutors. At the request of family members, the LASD will do everything possible to give victims a voice at the table to address their concerns. ... I strongly believe this is the right thing to do."

"Prosecutors are committed to keeping communities safe and to serving as a voice for crime victims. Crime victims should be a powerful force in California, but we are now seeing leaders trying to achieve their goals for criminal justice reform by silencing the voices of victims," said Greg Totten, Chief Executive Officer of the California District Attorneys Association. "We must find a balance between reforms that make sense for public safety and curtailing the rights of victims."

To that end, CDAA is working with its members and retired prosecutors to ensure victims are represented at parole hearings for Los Angeles County cases. "Under [Marsy's Law](#), the California Constitution was amended to specifically recognize victims' rights in criminal proceedings, including parole proceedings," said Amador County District Attorney Todd Riebe, co-chair of CDAA's Lifer/Parole Committee. "Prosecutors are specifically designated as an appropriate person to represent the interests of victims at parole hearings, and they do so in every other county in the state, so we feel compelled to step in to help navigate the process for victims."

The California District Attorneys Association is a statewide training and advocacy organization representing elected district attorneys, city attorneys with criminal divisions, and more than 3,500 prosecutors, including deputy district attorneys in Los Angeles County.

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