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McCarty's Drug Treatment Bill Passes out of Public Safety Committee
AB 1542 "Hope Yolo" would provide treatment
to those involved in the criminal justice system who live with drug addiction

(Woodland, CA) – **April 15, 2021** – On April 13, 2021, California Assembly Member Kevin McCarty's Yolo County Bill passed through the Assembly Public Safety Committee with no opposition votes. McCarty authored AB 1542 in partnership with Yolo County District Attorney Jeff Reisig and Yolo County Supervisor Gary Sandy. Assembly member Cecilia Aguiar-Curry and State Senator Bill Dodd are coauthors.

If it becomes law, AB 1542 would allow Yolo County to develop a secured treatment facility for individuals who are involved in the criminal justice system and who live with substance use disorders. Those eligible for the treatment program would include people who have committed drug motivated felonies that, absent this program, would result in them being sentenced to jail or prison. Those who commit misdemeanors, simple drug possession, sex offenses, and strike offenses would not be eligible. Those who are eligible would be assessed by treatment providers from the Yolo County Health and Human Services Agency, who would decide the level and length of treatment necessary. Individuals found suitable for the program would be given a choice of serving time in jail or prison, or entering the secured facility where they would receive treatment to help them get well. Once they have completed the secured inpatient program, they would move to a residential treatment facility or receive intensive outpatient treatment. This is all contingent on the assessment and recommendations of their treatment providers. After successfully completing the program, the subject's current charges, and prior drug convictions, would be dismissed and expunged from their record so they can get a fresh start.

AB 1542 was the last bill to be taken up in committee. McCarty introduced the Bill concept and Public Safety Committee Chair Reginald Jones-Sawyer then asked District Attorney Jeff Reisig for his comments. Reisig, speaking by phone due to the COVID-19 pandemic, stated, "too many people who suffer from substance use disorder are going to jail or prison for crimes that are motivated by their addiction, and prisons and jails are not places where people who are sick go to get better. So instead, AB 1542 envisions creating a secure hospital-like treatment facility, without jails and bars and guards and guns, that can serve as a sanctuary for seriously addicted felony offenders who voluntarily choose to try local community-based treatment and wrap-around services, in a safe and secure setting right here at home instead of being shipped off and warehoused behind bars, and we're calling this place Hope Yolo."

There were a number of individuals representing various organizations who spoke in opposition to the Bill. Following these speakers, each of the members of the Committee gave their comments. Public Safety Chair Jones-Sawyer was the final speaker before the vote was taken. Addressing McCarty, Jones-Sawyer stated “your Bill now actually attacks drug abuse in coming up with a different way to achieve what we all want, which is to get people off the street and off of drugs. We want to give them enough doors so they can get on the road to recovery. I am an aye.” The roll call vote was taken with seven ayes and one abstention.

After the Bill passed through Public Safety, McCarty said, “The addiction crisis is in front of us and it’s not going away. The longer we wait the more lives it will cost. AB 1542 Hope Yolo is an innovative pilot program to provide treatment over incarceration.

The next stop for AB 1542 is the Health Committee, where the Bill will be heard on April 27th. Supervisor Sandy stated he was pleased to see the Bill make it out of the Public Safety Committee and is looking forward to a robust discussion on April 20th. “The population we are looking at are ill and suffer from serious drug addictions. But they also are committing significant crimes in our communities which must be addressed. We need to try something new and this bill will give those who would be spending time in jail or prison a choice and opportunity to get the help they need in a secure facility. It’s the humane way to treat them.” The Bill will be discussed at Yolo County Board of Supervisors meeting on April 20, 2021, starting at 9 am. The public can follow the meeting via Zoom at: <https://www.yolocounty.org/government/board-of-supervisors/board-meetings> and public comments are encouraged. AB 1542 Bill Information can be found here: <https://bit.ly/2RuNxc0>

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