



# COUNTY OF YOLO

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## **McCarty's Drug Treatment Bill Passes out of Senate Public Safety Committee**

**AB 1542 would provide treatment to those involved in the criminal justice system who live with drug addiction**

(Woodland, CA) – On June 29, 2021, California Assemblymember Kevin McCarty's Yolo County Bill passed through the Senate Public Safety Committee with no opposition votes. On June 2, the bill sailed through the Assembly with a 65-1 floor vote.

Assemblymember McCarty authored AB 1542, Hope Yolo <https://yoloda.org/hope-yolo/>, in partnership with Yolo County District Attorney Jeff Reisig and Yolo County Supervisor Gary Sandy. State Senator Bill Dodd is a co-author. 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 eligible would be assessed by treatment providers who would decide the level and length of treatment. Individuals found suitable for the program would be given a choice of serving time in jail or prison, or entering the soft 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 recommendation of the treatment providers. After 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.

After, Asm. McCarty introduced the bill and comments from the public were heard, Public Safety Committee member Senator Scott Wiener (San Francisco) stated, "When drugs are interacting with someone's commission of a crime how do we deal with that in a way that's not simply punitive, in a way that actually is getting people the help that they need?" Wiener asked a number of questions raised by his constituents and concluded, "I'm going to support moving this out of committee today because I know the author is operating in good faith and I know where his values lie in terms of criminal justice reform." Next, committee member Sydney Kamlager (Los Angeles) shared her concerns and said she wanted to see the amendments to the bill before supporting it. She concluded, "I do want to make sure it gets out of this committee because I have faith in the author and sometimes you have to create radical alternatives to get different outcomes." Before calling for the vote, Committee Chair Steven Bradford (Gardena) expressed his concerns and stated "I see a need for something like this because as you stated, the majority of people who go to prison who go there with an addiction usually get out with that same addiction because we don't have real rehabilitation in our prison system or jail system so this affords an opportunity for the rehabilitation I would hope for and reduced recidivism."

AB 1542 was previously supported by the Yolo County Board of Supervisors at an April 20, 2021 meeting. Supervisor Gary Sandy commented, "I'm pleased that the Senate Public Safety Committee has moved the bill forward. Hope Yolo will help many people in our County get well and have successful and productive lives." Former Yolo County Office of Education Superintendent Dr. Jesse Ortiz, who spoke in favor of the bill at a recent Board of Supervisors meeting, stated, "Hope Yolo will give people a choice to help

themselves and families. When individuals successfully complete the program, they will have their criminal records expunged which will lead to opportunities to reliable employment. The model being used has proven to work and will benefit the total community. Assemblymember McCarty and District Attorney Reisig should be commended for their leadership and compassion for attempting to do what's right for this vulnerable population."

McCarty stated, "Hope Yolo is about finding ways to deal with the addiction crisis that we see every day. I am committed to perfecting this legislation as much as possible because our goal is to save lives. The longer we wait the more lives it will cost." AB 1542 will next move to the Senate Health Committee.

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