

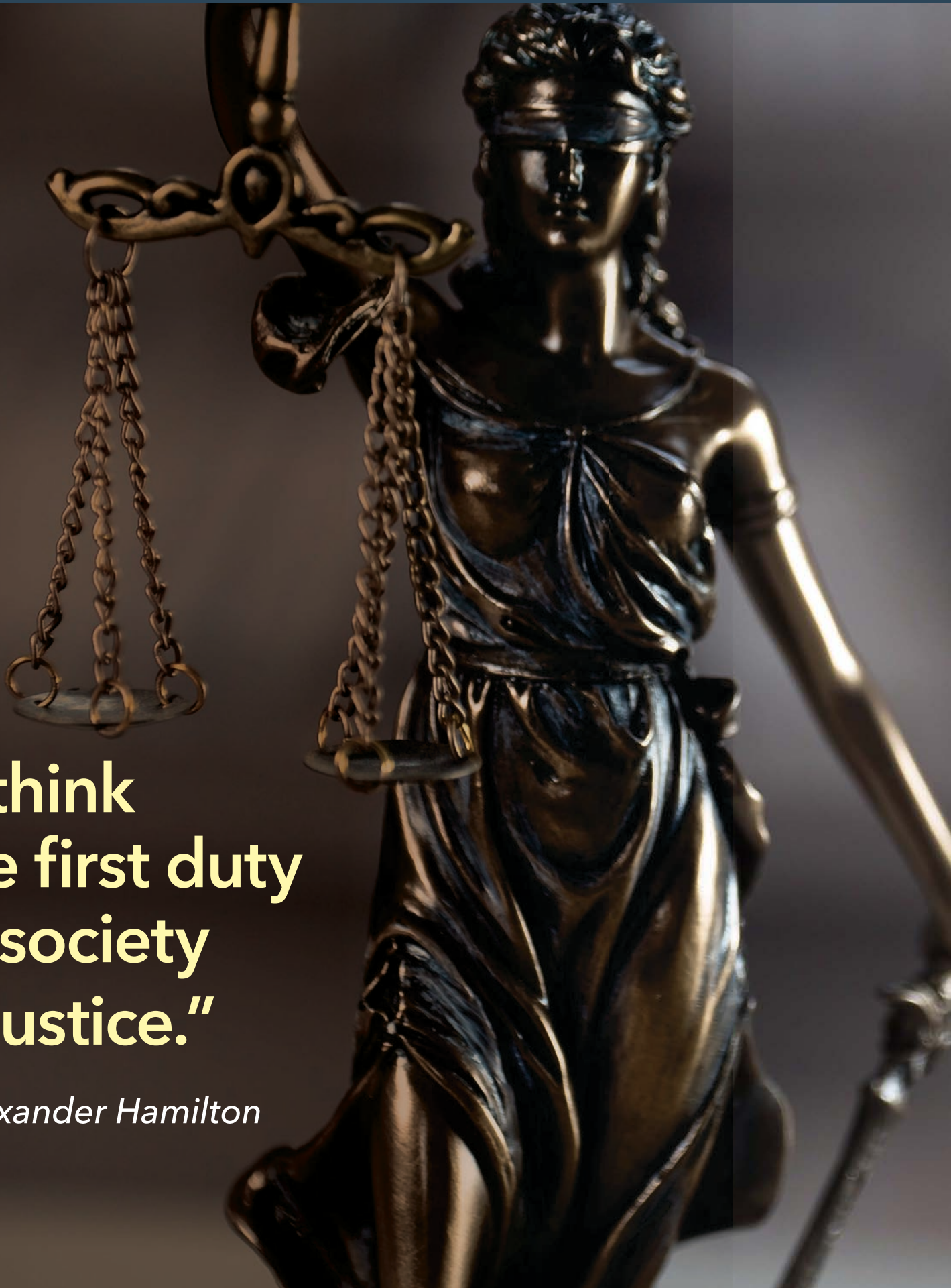
MIDTERM REPORT



A MIDTERM REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND
BALANCED REFORM UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF
**SAN DIEGO COUNTY DISTRICT
ATTORNEY SUMMER STEPHAN**

TRANSFORMING CRIMINAL JUSTICE IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY:
A STRATEGIC APPROACH FOCUSED ON INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

SAN DIEGO COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY



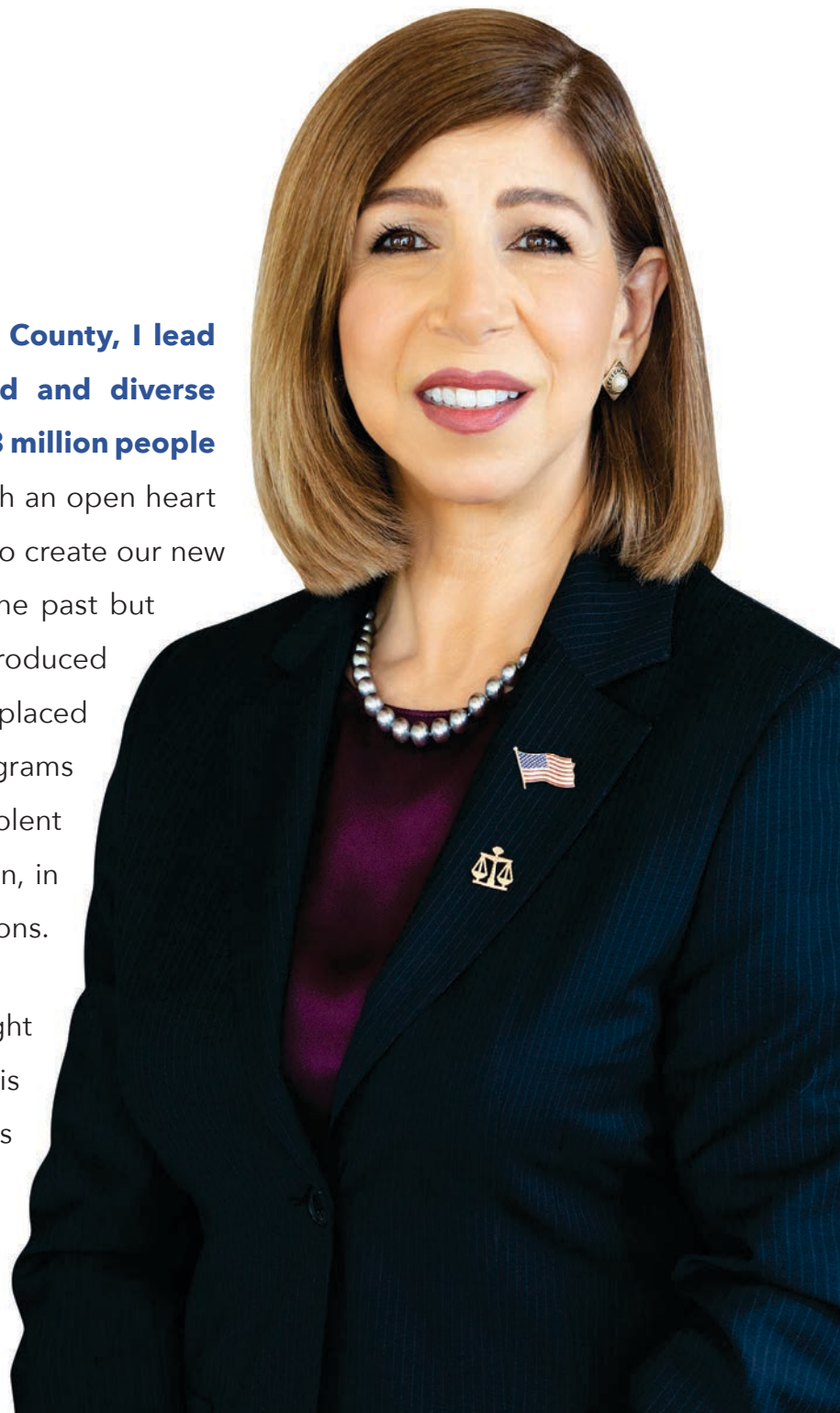
**"I think
the first duty
of society
is justice."**

- Alexander Hamilton

A Message from San Diego County District Attorney Summer Stephan

As District Attorney for San Diego County, I lead and work alongside a dedicated and diverse 1,000-member team that serves over 3.3 million people with integrity and passion. I listened with an open heart and mind to the voices in the community to create our new mission, which retains the excellence of the past but boldly reforms previous inequities that produced an over reliance on incarceration. I've replaced them with evidence-based treatment programs that address the root causes of non-violent crime, such as mental health and addiction, in order to forge effective and humane solutions.

At the same time, our team continues to fight for justice on behalf of crime victims and is responsible for prosecuting all felony crimes that occur in the county including murders, sexual assaults, and DUI fatalities; and all misdemeanor crimes that occur outside the City of San Diego. We work with all



nine police departments in the county and Sheriff's Department to make sure those who harm others and terrorize neighborhoods are held accountable under the law.

The team at the District Attorney's Office reflects the diverse cultures, races, religions, gender and sexual orientation of the communities we serve. While we cherish our unique experiences, we are united by our new mission to pursue fair and equal justice for all and to build safe neighborhoods through the ethical prosecution of crime, protecting victims, preventing harm and partnering with the community. Our enhanced focus on preventing harm by interrupting cycles of violence and reducing recidivism is producing positive results that we are closely tracking.

There is nothing more central to our responsibility to protect public safety than the sanctity of human life and our duty to stand with the voiceless in the pursuit of fair and equal justice. Those of us who are leaders in law enforcement have the profound duty and responsibility to use our power to dismantle generations of inequity and, with courage, continue to build systems of justice that represent a new way forward. My own story carries the generational pain of systemic injustice to my grandmother, who was orphaned and driven as a child out of her home by the ravages of the Armenian genocide, finding a safe haven in this country that she loved.

As we look to the future and meet the challenges ahead of us, it is also valuable to provide our community at this juncture with information about the progress we've made and what we've accomplished. I am excited to share the innovative programs and initiatives that our team has launched during my first two years as your elected District Attorney and to highlight the future plans. They are summarized in this Midterm Report and I hope you will take a few moments to look through it. The data outcomes so far are exceeding our expectations and we hope that by sharing our strategies we can help inform other DA Offices across the nation that maybe looking to improve their criminal justice systems.

I am inspired daily by those who are committed to working with us on innovative, responsible and safe criminal justice reform. I value listening to and learning from the community we serve. Despite facing the challenges of a worldwide pandemic, our DA team has shown up daily to serve the most vulnerable, to give a voice to the voiceless, and to create a fair and equal justice system that fights for victims and treats everyone with dignity and respect. The core of the criminal justice reform model

we developed at the District Attorney's Office relies on harm reduction. We look for ways to reduce the risk of harm, acknowledging that we can't eliminate all of it. This approach requires complex solutions that don't sideline anyone's rights and that work to improve outcomes for public safety. I don't believe that we need to choose between protecting victims' rights or protecting the rights of those who commit crime or the right of the community to be safe. I believe the only responsible choice for a modern-day District Attorney's Office is to fulfill our legal and ethical responsibilities with excellence and to support all of these fundamental rights. We choose to protect and fulfill our responsibilities in a transparent, community-connected and evidence-based way. Our independent brand of reform stays away from politics and is grounded in what works. I believe that we can be



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excellent prosecutors and take care of crime victims compassionately, while at the same time treating individuals in our criminal justice system with fairness and humanity. I believe that accountability and compassion are not opposites but can work hand in hand to deliver a responsible, balanced criminal justice system.

The work of public safety and justice has a tremendous impact on the life and dignity of people and is serious and hard work. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. described it best when he said, "Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable. Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals." This is the journey to which our office is committed. And this is why we are living out the promise of a District Attorney's Office that is truly 'For the People.' That means everyone. San Diego County residents from every neighborhood, political party, economic status, race, ethnicity, gender and sexual identity. We also believe justice is the right of everyone and is best served by a nonpartisan and nonpolitical approach. A studied and documented truth is that without safety, nothing else can thrive. You can't build healthy neighborhoods in the midst of violence and crime. Through this lens, the San Diego County District Attorney's Office continues to become even more purposeful, thoughtful and compassionate in fulfilling our mission.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



This Midterm Report provides a summary of 50 specific initiatives, programs and reforms that have been achieved by the San Diego County District Attorney's Office under DA Stephan's leadership thus far. Halfway through her first term, District Attorney Summer Stephan has cleared San Diego's rape kit backlog, increased support and services for crime victims, tripled the prosecution of hate crimes, created multiple opportunities for people to be diverted away from jail and onto a better path, and established innovative programs focused on helping some of the most vulnerable in San Diego County— those with mental illness, the elderly and our youth.

■ Accomplishments outlined in this Midterm Report include:

- ▶ Enacted several criminal justice reforms that include expanded county wide diversion programs for adults and youth, proactively removing marijuana convictions from an individual's record, and bail reform based on risk not wealth.
- ▶ Worked collaboratively to address the intersection of mental health, homelessness and the criminal justice system including a Blueprint for Mental Health Reform, 24/7 community-based Crisis Stabilization Care Centers and regional Mobile Crisis Response Teams that respond to people in mental health crisis instead of police.
- ▶ Launched a new and expanded Conviction and Sentence Review Unit, committed to undoing unjust or previously harsh prison sentences.
- ▶ Worked to interrupt the 'school to prison pipeline' by reforming the Juvenile Justice System. Through the Handle with Care App, we leveraged technology to support kids who experienced trauma to reduce the effect it may have on them in school.
- ▶ The DA led and funded countywide de-escalation training for every police department to better protect the lives of community members and officers. The DA supported stronger police department policies on mandated de-escalation and a stricter mandate for fellow officers to report police misconduct.

- ▶ Increased the protection of victims by holding a first-of-its-kind Crime Victim and Survivor Summit to identify gaps in victim services. We teamed up with Rady Children’s Hospital to address child abuse and established a new app that’s helping victims of domestic violence find a bed in a shelter within minutes instead of days.
- ▶ Advanced new initiatives focusing on combating emerging threats to children, schools, sexual assault and hate crimes. These initiatives include leading and funding countywide testing of all untested sexual assault kits, combating hate crime by establishing an online reporting tool for the public, establishing the Student Safety in Schools reporting system to shine a light on abuse of students, and developed a uniform protocol with school districts to prevent acts of targeted violence in schools.
- ▶ We worked to combat the deadly threat of opioids and fentanyl through targeted prosecution of dealers whose product led to overdose deaths, which are increasing in our county at an alarming rate. And we led a unique digital outreach campaign– The San Diego Opioid Project– which tallied 46 million online impressions and 3.8 million social media engagements.
- ▶ Implemented a Blueprint for Elder Abuse Prevention, Protection and Prosecution; launched a unique public/private partnership in schools to educate children and prevent them from falling prey to human trafficking and sexual exploitation, and trained all first responders and firefighters in the county to recognize potential victims of human trafficking.
- ▶ Prioritized strengthening community partnerships by establishing new DA positions including regional Community Partnership Prosecutors who problem solve in the community instead of the courtroom.
- ▶ Worked to reduce bias and dismantle racism by establishing an internal Committee on Racial Equity to improve internal and external systems related to the criminal justice system and the District Attorney’s Office. Recommitted to diversity among DA employees that mirrors that of the wider community to build trust and include diverse voices, viewpoints and cultures in our office and the decisions we make.

- ▶ Worked collaboratively to reinvent the criminal justice system and keep the wheels of justice moving amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The DA's Office helped reduce the local jail population, helped the county with hundreds of Coronavirus contact tracings, and sounded the alarm to the Governor and local leaders about the importance of re-opening schools amid a disturbing rise in child abuse and domestic violence reports.
- ▶ Finally, we fulfilled our constitutional duty to hold the most violent and serious criminals in our county accountable. Amid the notable prosecutions undertaken were the hate-motivated shooting at a Poway synagogue, a massive public corruption fraud case involving charter schools, and a caregiver for the elderly who starved her victims and stole their money.

■ What's next? DA Stephan is leading three main initiatives that will take flight this year:

1. We are launching an innovative Juvenile Diversion Program grounded in restorative practices that will hold youth accountable but keep them out of the system and stop them from having a criminal record.
2. Recognizing that northern San Diego County is disproportionately affected by domestic violence, we will open the North Family Justice Center: One Safe Place. It's a "one stop shop" where trauma survivors can receive acute crisis care, forensic medical exams, counseling, legal services, connections to a shelter and help with housing and social service benefits.
3. We're creating a new Workplace Justice Unit dedicated to protecting workers' rights, prosecuting criminal wage theft cases and stopping labor trafficking.

Our data is showing great promise that the change and reform embraced by the District Attorney's Office is on the right track and is bringing increased equity and fairness to the community. At the same time, the office is fulfilling its duty to keep San Diego one of the safest urban counties in America through fair and equal prosecution of our county's most violent criminals.

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