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Youth ALIVE!
Oakland, CA

July 9, 2018

Governor Edmund G. Brown
c/o State Capitol, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 1639 (Garcia) Victim Compensation Fund Expansion – SUPPORT and SIGN

Dear Governor Brown,

On behalf of Youth ALIVE!, I am writing in support of Assembly Bill 1639 (Garcia): Victim Compensation Fund Expansion. AB 1639 would prohibit the board from denying an application for a claim solely because the victim or derivative victim is a person who is listed in the CalGang system or alleged by local law enforcement to be gang involved. Furthermore, the bill would task the Victims Compensation Board with informing and training local distributors of victim compensation funds and services that they cannot exclude people based on gang allegations or their documentation status.

Excluding formerly incarcerated or "gang-affiliated" individuals and their family members or asking for documentation as proof of anything other than connection to the incident and victim(s) blocks the most vulnerable Californians from receiving clinical mental health treatment and victim of crime resources and results in their systemic re-traumatization. Trauma-informed practices are supposed to provide a new paradigm for organizing services and supports that recognize the central role that trauma plays in people's lives and shifts the focus from "what is wrong with you?" to "what happened to you?"

The California Victim Compensation Board (Cal VCB) provides support to communities by promoting access to services that support healing for crime survivors. Cal VCB can help pay bills and expenses that result from certain crimes including funeral and burial expenses, income loss, medical treatment, and residential security. In addition, Cal VCB supports communities in accessing services that support healing by funding Trauma Recovery Centers. Trauma Recovery Centers were created through the federal Victims of Crime Act (1984) to offer a greater resource of safety, healing, accountability, and empowerment to the most vulnerable communities in states across the country that are susceptible to increased exposure to and encounters with crime and violence.

While the California Victim Compensation Board (Cal VCB) has helped thousands of crime survivors to re-build their lives following trauma, many Californians that may identify as crime survivors are still currently ineligible or excluded from receiving crime survivor services through Cal VCB due to such things as being identified as "on probation/parole," "undocumented" or "gang-affiliated," leaving many struggling to remain resilient in the wake of structural and systemic barriers that prevent them from sustaining their livelihoods, and recovering from unresolved traumas.

A comprehensive and holistic, trauma-informed approach to Cal VCB eligibility expansion encompasses a broad, system-wide effort that challenges notions of victimization which discriminate against the recovery of ALL individuals of our communities impacted by crime

and violence. Trauma-recovery and crime survivor coordination of care must include those most at risk to engage in future crime and violence in order to sustain long-term violence prevention and crime reduction efforts.

Youth ALIVE! is a violence prevention and intervention organization that helps young people become leaders and advocates for the change they would like to see in their communities through our Teens on Target Program, mentors and supports healing for young people who have been violently injured through our Caught in the Crossfire program, and works with families grieving in the wake of a homicide through our Khadafy Washington Project. Our clients are impacted by Victim Compensation on multiple levels and this legislation could help them on their journeys of healing.

Youth ALIVE! is in strong support of this bill to expand the Victim Compensation Fund. Please support and sign AB 1639.

Sincerely,

Anne Marks
Executive Director