



Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia, 56th Assembly District

AB 1639 – Victim Compensation Fund Expansion

Updated: 5/22/18

BACKGROUND

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.

ISSUE

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” 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; in other words, trauma-recovery and crime survivor coordination of care must include those most at risk to perpetuate crime & violence in order to embody a holistic solution that sustains long-term violence prevention and crime reduction efforts which address the benefits of restorative practices that utilize and expand access to healing resources while re-investing in disadvantaged communities that have suffered socio-economic consequences due to high rates of crime & violence.

The safety-driven approach to crime and violence prevention focuses on strengthening a community’s ability to ensure the safety of its citizens, by first ensuring systemic investment in their livelihoods and neighborhoods so that educational, health, and socio-economic opportunities can thrive, thus, mitigating the spread of crime and violence through greenlining and equitable access to behavioral health resources. Interrupting cycles of violence requires short-term mediation of violent circumstances; whereas, preventing cycles of violence from continuing requires holistic

rehabilitation and systemic reconciliation for those at highest risk to co-produce violence. Thus, to foster and strengthen accessible connections to crime survivor services for high-risk populations strengthens the community’s connections to each other, and offers a potential long-term solution to reducing crime and preventing violence from being normalized in California’s neighborhoods any longer.

BILL SUMMARY

AB 1639 would annually require every law enforcement agency to provide the board with the contact information of the Victims of Crime Liaison Officer. The bill would require the board to conduct outreach to local law enforcement agencies about their duty pursuant to these provisions. The bill would require that the board’s outreach and training affirm that neither access to information about victim compensation, nor an application for compensation, shall be denied solely on the basis of the victim’s or derivative victim’s membership in, association with, or affiliation with, a gang or on the basis of the victim’s or derivative victim’s designation as a suspected gang member, associate, or—affiliate in a shared gang database. The bill would also—require that the board’s outreach and training affirm that neither access to information about victim compensation, nor an application for compensation, shall be denied on the basis of the victim’s or derivative victim’s documentation or immigration status.

SUPPORT

- Fathers & Families of San Joaquin (Sponsor)
- Alliance for Boys and Men of Color
- California Attorneys for Criminal Justice
- National Center for Youth Law
- PolicyLink
- W. Haywood Burns Institute
- Youth Alive!
- Youth Justice Coalition

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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