



PREVENTING VIOLENCE
AND DEVELOPING
YOUTH LEADERS

March 7, 2014

Assemblymember Rob Bonta
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0018
RE: AB 1629 (BONTA): SUPPORT

YOUTH ALIVE!
3300 Elm Street
Oakland, Ca 94609
Tel: (510) 594-2588
Fax: (510) 594-0667
mail@youthalive.org
www.youthalive.org

Dear Assemblymember Bonta:

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ADVISORY COUNCIL**

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Former Mayor of Los Angeles

DIANNE FEINSTEIN
United States Senator

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On behalf of Youth ALIVE! I am writing to express our strong support for AB 1629. This bill would support physical and emotional recovery for Californians injured by gun or other violence, through the Crime Victims Compensation Fund for community violence peer counselors, sometimes called Violence Intervention Specialists, as service providers.

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ANNE C. MARKS, MPP
Executive Director
Youth ALIVE!
Oakland, CA

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.

We know that violence – and the trauma it brings – is pervasive. It is not enough to simply acknowledge that people are hurting from the trauma they experience; we must help them to heal. The counseling our staff and the staffs of other programs that provide similar services – like Los Angeles Caught in the Crossfire, San Francisco Wraparound Project, Richmond Restorative Pathways Program, Sacramento Violence Intervention Program and San Jose's Trauma to Triumph – provides critical support to the victims who need it.

The Victim's Compensation Program is the largest source of victim's benefits in California. While CalVCP offers benefits to a wide range of victims, there are shortcomings to the current system. Victim's Compensation funds are intended to be available for vulnerable individuals, especially people who experience violence. One way to address the shortcomings of CalVCP is to ensure that programs providing peer counseling to victims of violent crime are able to request reimbursement for those services. Under the existing model, "Intervention Specialists" providing counseling to victims of domestic and sexual violence are reimbursed. Unfortunately, peer counseling for victims of other violent crimes is not also reimbursed through the program.

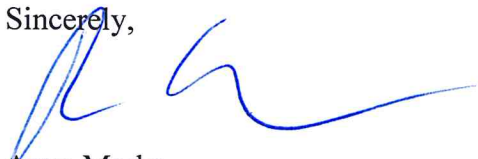
AB1629 would close a loophole in the law to ensure all communities impacted by violence can continue to receive the much needed benefits counseling from trusted sources. AB 1629 builds on the intelligent, pioneering efforts of the

domestic violence movement, who first demonstrated the effectiveness of non-clinical peer counseling as a model to provide victims of violent crime and successfully lobbied for reimbursement for peer counseling to become part of CalVCP.

Trauma has serious consequences for health, achievement, and general well-being. AB 1629 encourages a Trauma-Informed approach that recognizes victims of violent crime need opportunities to heal in ways that are culturally appropriate. We know that the long-term costs of *not* addressing trauma are far higher than the costs of intervening immediately and appropriately. This legislation would provide vital resources to programs around the state that are providing these much needed services.

We are proud to support AB 1629.

Sincerely,



Anne Marks

Executive Director, Youth ALIVE!

Training Director, National Network of Hospital-based Violence Intervention Programs