



PREVENTING VIOLENCE  
AND DEVELOPING  
YOUTH LEADERS

July 24, 2015

The Honorable Freddie Rodriguez  
California State Capitol, 6025  
Sacramento, California 95814

**Re: AB 71 – as amended 7/6/15 - SUPPORT**

Dear Assemblymember Rodriguez:

The Youth ALIVE! supports AB 71. This bill will enhance public safety, and improve law enforcement transparency and accountability, by increasing public access to invaluable information concerning law enforcement use of force that results in death or serious bodily injury.

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.

Over the course of the past year, the deaths of numerous unarmed people of color at the hands of law enforcement have sparked a critical conversation about race, law enforcement agencies, and the communities they serve.

Here in California, the public is often left in the dark when it comes to information about force used by law enforcement. All state and local law enforcement agencies have submitted information concerning deaths in custody – including those that occur during arrest – to the state Department of Justice (DOJ) since 1980; however, the DOJ has been unable to provide the public with detailed information about such deaths on a routine basis. In fact, its last report on the issue, released in 2005, provided less than four-pages of information, stating that it was “intended as a brief overview,” and that “additional detailed research could be done if resources were available.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Criminal Justice Statistics Center, Outlook: Death in Custody, California (May 2005), available at <http://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/cjsc/publications/misc/DINCoutlook.pdf>

Youth ALIVE is a 501c3 nonprofit organization. Our Tax ID is 94-3143254.

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This lack of transparency inhibits public trust and hinders the development of potentially life-saving law enforcement reforms. FBI Director James Comey recently declared:

How can we address concerns about “use of force,” how can we address concerns about officer-involved shootings if we do not have a reliable grasp of the demographics and circumstances of those incidents? We simply must improve the way we collect and analyze data to see the true nature of what’s happening in all of our communities.<sup>2</sup>

AB 71 would help satisfy this void by expanding the current death-in-custody reporting requirement to include use of force that result in serious bodily injury. It would also ensure that the public has regular access to important information concerning law enforcement use of force practices. Accordingly, to improve public safety, and advance police-community relations, the Youth ALIVE! strongly supports AB 71.

Please do not hesitate to contact us should you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Anne Marks  
Executive Director

cc: Members and Committee Staff, Senate Appropriations Committee

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<sup>2</sup> FBI Director James B. Comey, *Hard Truths: Law Enforcement and Race* (Feb. 12, 2015), *available at* <http://www.fbi.gov/news/speeches/hard-truths-law-enforcement-and-race>.