



PREVENTING VIOLENCE
AND DEVELOPING
YOUTH LEADERS

March 28, 2017

The Honorable Reginald Jones-Sawyer
State Capitol, Room 2117
Sacramento, California 95814

Youth ALIVE!
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RE: AB 1639 (Garcia) Victim Compensation Fund Eligibility – SUPPORT

Dear Assembly Member Jones-Sawyer,

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.

Excluding formerly incarcerated or “gang-affiliated” individuals and their family members from receiving clinical mental health treatment and victim of crime resources results in their systemic re-traumatization – in that, “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” 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

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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.

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 on probation and/or 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. The work Youth ALIVE! does reinforces the need to provide services to injured individuals regardless of perceived affiliations or previous mistakes in order to break the cycle of violence.

Youth ALIVE! is in strong support of this bill to expand the Victim Compensation Fund and respectfully requests your "aye" vote.

Sincerely,



Anne Marks
Executive Director

CC:

Assembly Member Eduardo Garcia
Assembly Member Tom Lackey
Assembly Member Jordan Cunningham
Assembly Member Lorena S. Gonzalez Fletcher
Assembly Member Bill Quirk
Assembly Member Blanca E. Rubio
Assembly Member Miguel Santiago