



PREVENTING VIOLENCE
AND DEVELOPING
YOUTH LEADERS

YOUTH ALIVE!
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June 22, 2021

The Honorable Steven Bradford
Chair, Senate Public Safety Committee
State Capitol, Room 2031
Sacramento, California 95814

RE: Support for AB 292 (Stone)

Dear Senator Bradford:

On behalf of Youth ALIVE!, we are writing in support of AB 292 (Stone), known as the Access to Programming Act. The Access to Programming Act will expand upon the growing success of rehabilitative in-prison programming by preventing disruptions to programming and credit-earning. As a response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, this bill ensures that in-prison programming continues during public health crises or other related emergencies instead of being indefinitely suspended.

Youth ALIVE! is a nationally recognized community-based organization known for initiating an alliance to treat violence as a public health crisis and developing young leaders in the process. Tasked as Oakland’s anchor organization for violence prevention, intervention, and healing, Youth ALIVE! has maintained a successful track record of implementing evidence-based violence intervention and prevention services. Our decades of experience serving clients who have been impacted by the criminal justice system informs our support of AB 292.

Recent changes to existing law have greatly expanded and incentivized programming for people who are incarcerated in California prisons. Still, the wait to participate in these classes remains years long at most prisons and CDCR has not developed the flexibility to ensure that each person’s rehabilitation is prioritized. CDCR needs expanded tools and resources to meet the demands of increased programming and rehabilitation.

The Access to Programming Act ensures that programming will be offered even if a facility is on lockdown, and would allow incarcerated people to earn milestone credits for work assignments. Current CDCR policy does not distinguish between lockdowns for security reasons and lockdowns for institutional needs like staff training. However, almost all rehabilitative programming is stopped for the duration of any and all lockdowns. These disruptions often undermine incarcerated people’s opportunity to learn valuable insights and skills. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, this disruption has made it so virtually no programming has been offered indefinitely. Further, incarcerated people are often denied access to education opportunities, and educational

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milestone credits, due to conflicting work assignments. This bill recognizes the training and skill-building that occurs within most job assignments.

The Access to Programming Act would reduce current barriers to programming due to transfers. Under current CDCR regulations, an incarcerated person's current programming is not considered during a non-adverse facility transfer. The Access to Programming Act instructs prisons to place transferred people on priority for programming that is consistent with the programming the person was participating in at the prison they are transferred from.

The Access to Programming Act offers equal incentives for programming, regardless of persons, health, or age, or physical abilities. Current CDCR policy awards enhanced good conduct credit earning for people who volunteer to fight fires. This policy excludes people who do not meet the criteria to volunteer due to disability, health, age, or physical reasons. It also is a very narrow incentive due to housing capacities. For example, of all the fire camps, only three are available to women. This bill will increase the effectiveness of this incentive by creating a fair standard and allowing everyone, regardless of disability, age, or health, a pathway to earn the same credits as people who volunteer in fire camps.

For these reasons, Youth ALIVE! supports AB 292 (Stone).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Anne Marks".

Anne Marks
Executive Director

CC: Greg Fidell, Initiate Justice (greg@initiatejustice.org)
Sean Porter, Office of Assemblymember Mark Stone (Sean.Porter@asm.ca.gov)