



SAVING LIVES FOR
30
YEARS

YOUTH ALIVE!
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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ANNE MARKS

June 6, 2022

Assembly Committee on Public Safety
Legislative Office Building, Room 111
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 993 (Skinner) – Victims Services and Support for All – CO-SPONSOR

Dear Chairman Reginald Byron Jones-Sawyer:

Youth ALIVE! writes to you as a Co-sponsor of Senate Bill (SB) 993 (Skinner) which improves access to financial resources available to survivors and exonerees and increase the amount they can receive from the California Victim Compensation Board (VCB). This bill would also remove barriers that prevent many crime survivors from receiving assistance, and reduce racial disparities that have impacted access to services.

Youth ALIVE! is a nationally recognized community-based organization known for initiating an international 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 victims of violent crime and navigating them through the California Victim Compensation Program motivates our co-sponsorship of SB 993.

California’s victim compensation program was designed to provide survivors of violent crime help covering critical expenses, including counseling, funeral costs, and lost earnings resulting from the crime. The program is only available when a survivor has no other means of covering these expenses, and is intended as a lifeline to allow survivors to heal. But too many survivors who need this support are not able to access it. Burdensome eligibility requirements, overwhelming paperwork, and a lack of knowledge about the program mean that most survivors never get the help they need.

Research has found that eligibility restrictions in the compensation program – including conviction-based restrictions, denials for alleged lack of cooperation, and subjective determinations about the victim’s innocence – contribute to inequitable rates of denials for our state’s most vulnerable populations, and specifically result in disproportionate denials for Black victims and families.

All survivors of crime deserve help and support. We know that racial disparities still exist within our criminal justice system. A 2021 report showed that despite reductions in rates of incarceration, black men are still 9.6 times more likely to be incarcerated in a state prison than their white counterparts, while Latinx men are 2.4 times more likely. The presence of a criminal history does not preclude an individual from being victimized during the commission of a crime nor does it deem them any less deserving of support. However,



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California is one of only eight states that excludes some survivors from receiving support because of their status on probation or parole.

Those survivors who do qualify must navigate overwhelming paperwork and restrictions that limit the kinds of resources they are eligible for. Many become so discouraged they discontinue their efforts to seek support. On average, it takes the VCB approximately 10 months to disburse benefits, during which survivors could be without essential resources such as eyeglasses, transportation, or may lose employment and consequently, income.

SB 993 would remove barriers that prevent many crime survivors from receiving assistance, reduce red tape in the application process, improve outreach about the program and other survivor resources, and lessen racial disparities that have impacted access to services.

For these reasons, we are proud to co-sponsor SB 993, and respectfully request your support on this bill.

Sincerely,

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

Anne Marks
Executive Director