



**COMMUNITY  
LEGAL SERVICES**  
IN EAST PALO ALTO

August 3, 2020

Senator Scott Wiener  
State Capitol, Room 5100  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Support for SB 378 (Wiener) re: probation alternatives for drug offenses**

Dear Senator Wiener:

On behalf of Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto (“CLSEPA”), I write in strong support of SB 378 (Wiener), legislation to grant judges appropriate discretion in sentencing drug offenses.

CLSEPA is a non-profit legal organization offering free legal services that improve the lives of low-income families throughout the region specializing in immigration, housing, workers’ rights, reentry and criminal records dismissal, and consumer protection.

SB 378 will not change the upper penalty for any offense but will provide judges the discretion to grant probation or to suspend a sentence in the interests of justice for offenses that are currently ineligible or presumed ineligible for probation. The repeal of mandatory minimum sentences has long been a priority for reform organizations nationwide, but is even more urgent in the time of COVID-19, as our state and local governments seek solutions to jail overcrowding and the danger of rapid spread of a deadly airborne infection.

Since the murder of George Floyd by a police officer in Minneapolis, the United States and California have refocused on the cruel, violent, and racist inequities of policing and incarceration. It is well known that the war on drugs has been disproportionately waged against African-American and Latinx families, separating parents from children and causing long-term collateral consequences, including loss of job opportunities, housing and education benefits.<sup>i</sup> This continues to be true, even in light of evidence that drug use and drug sale rates between whites, blacks and Latinx are approximately equal in our state and in our country. According to the California Attorney General’s Office,<sup>ii</sup> in 2016 blacks made up 16.5% of felony drug arrests (while blacks make up only 6.6% of the state population), and Latinos made up 41.3% of felony drug arrests (while Latinos make up 24.4% of the state population between the ages 19 and 54).<sup>iii</sup>

Our organization supports SB 378 (Wiener) and lends our voice to the broad coalition seeking sentencing reform, including the repeal of mandatory minimum sentences.

Respectfully,

*Katrina Logan*

Katrina Logan  
Directing Attorney  
Economic Advancement Program

cc: Office of Senator Scott Wiener c/o [angela.hill@sen.ca.gov](mailto:angela.hill@sen.ca.gov)  
Norma Palacios, Drug Policy Alliance [npalacios@drugpolicy.org](mailto:npalacios@drugpolicy.org)  
Glenn Backes, Drug Policy Alliance [glennbackes@mac.com](mailto:glennbackes@mac.com)

---

<sup>1</sup> Drug Policy Alliance: Race and the Drug War. <http://www.drugpolicy.org/issues/race-and-drug-war>

<sup>2</sup> California Dept of Justice. Crime in California 2016. <https://oag.ca.gov/crime>

<sup>3</sup> US Census Bureau: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/CA>