



**COMMUNITY
LEGAL SERVICES**
IN EAST PALO ALTO

March 2, 2021

Honorable Assemblymember Ash Kalra
State Capitol, Room 2196
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Support – AB 256 (Kalra), the California Racial Justice Act for All

Dear Assemblymember Kalra,

On behalf of Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto (“CLSEPA”), I write in strong support of your AB 256, the California Racial Justice Act for All, which will provide a mechanism for relief for those whose convictions or sentences were based upon race, ethnicity, or national origin. This bill will extend the essential protections of the California Racial Justice Act (AB 2542, 2020) to all Californians.

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.

With the Racial Justice Act, California took a profound step forward in addressing institutionalized and implicit racial bias in our criminal courts by empowering defendants to object to charges, convictions, or punishment if they can show that anyone involved in their case — a judge, attorney, officer, expert witness or juror — demonstrated bias during the process, or if they can show statistical evidence of demographic inequities in charges, convictions, or sentences for the same crime. However, this legislation was prospective; it excluded those who had been harmed prior to January 1, 2021 by the racial bias and discrimination that has long permeated our criminal legal system.

If prohibiting racism in our courts and providing a person a means to remedy racial bias in their case is the right thing to do, it is the right thing to do for everyone. Those with prior, racially biased convictions and sentences deserve equal justice under the law and have waited long enough. Additionally, providing a mechanism for retroactive relief will allow the state to realize significant court and correctional savings.

For these reasons, we support AB 256, the California Racial Justice Act for All, which will make the Racial Justice Act retroactive to ensure that everyone is afforded an opportunity to pursue justice. Please contact me at Katrina@clsepa.org for any questions about our position.

Respectfully,

Katrina Logan

Katrina Logan
Directing Attorney
Economic Advancement Program

CC: Amber-Rose Howard, racialjusticeforall@gmail.com