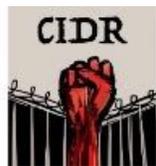




California



February 1, 2020

Hon. Reginald Byron Jones-Sawyer Sr.
Chairman, Assembly Public Safety Committee
Legislative Office Building
1020 N Street, Room 111
Sacramento, CA 95814

Support Letter AB 263 – The HOLD Act: Health Oversight and Leadership in Detention Act

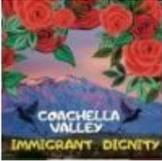
We are writing to express our support for AB 263, a bill which ensures that all detention facilities in our state follow public health orders, and provide a safe workplace for their employees.

At present, California is home to five privately operated civil detention facilities that have the capacity to hold more than 5,600 individuals at any given time, with future plans to expand to as many as 7,200. There is also one private prison still in operation with a contract with CDCR until 2023.

One of the six indicators put forth by Governor Newsom’s plan to reopen the state is the ability to prevent COVID-19 outbreaks in facilities that are vulnerable to infection, including detention facilities. All six of these private facilities have been the site of COVID- 19 outbreaks. In an effort to ensure compliance with public health orders during the COVID-19 pandemic, California must ensure public health and safety laws are followed in every detention facility in the state.

Private detention facilities in the state of California pose a unique and critical challenge with respect to public health and safety during the COVID-19 pandemic. The potential humanitarian crisis posed by the spread of COVID-19 in private immigration detention facilities in California can have disastrous consequences for those detained in these facilities, as well as neighboring communities.

During a pandemic in which the actions of a few can impact the wellbeing of so many, accountability for private prison operators is paramount. While the consequences of COVID- 19 in private detention are dire for those detained, it should be of grave concern given the significant challenges this potential outbreak has for California as a whole. Outbreaks in these facilities can quickly overwhelm local hospitals and drain medical resources, threatening community health and public safety.



Civil detention facilities that house immigrants have requirements in their federal contracts with respect to health and safety. This includes language requiring each facility to “comply with current and future plans implemented by federal, state or local authorities addressing specific public health issues including communicable disease reporting requirements.” In addition to the mandatory requirements related to public health, the federal government has issued broad requirements related to the day to day operations of these facilities, including requirements related to health and safety in these facilities.

Based on reports in the press and by those detained inside these facilities, it appears that these private corporations routinely violate the health and safety requirements for these facilities in their daily operations, and have not followed public health orders or protocols. California must take steps to clarify that all private detention facilities in the state must abide by state and local public health orders. This would ensure the statewide coordination that will be needed to secure our state during the COVID-19 pandemic. California must also ensure that all of these facilities are following occupational health and safety regulations in their operations.

For the reasons stated above we strongly support AB 263 (Bonta).

Respectfully,

- ACLU of CA
- Advancing Justice-LA
- Alianza Sacramento
- Buen Vecino
- California Pan-Ethnic Health Network
- Campaign for Immigrant Detention Reform (CIDR)
- Center for Gender & Refugee Studies
- Central Valley Immigrant Integration Collaborative
- Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice
- Coachella Valley Immigrant Dignity
- Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto
- CRLA Foundation
- Disability Rights California
- Dolores Street Community Services
- Ella Baker Center
- Familia: Trans Queer Liberation Movement
- Hand in Hand: The Domestic Employers Network
- Human Rights Watch
- ICE Out of Marin
- Immigrant Defenders Law Center



SECURE JUSTICE

CENTER FOR
Gender & Refugee
STUDIES

PUBLIC  LAW CENTER

Immigrant Legal Defense
Inland Equity Partnership
Law Office of Helen Lawrence
Los Angeles Human Rights Initiative
NorCal Resist
Oasis Legal Services
Public Law Center
Reiki Center of the East Bay
Riverside Sheriffs' Association
San Joaquin College of Law - New American Legal Clinic
Secure Justice
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
Southern California Providers for Health Equity
STEP UP! Sacramento
University of San Francisco Immigration & Deportation Defense Clinic
VIDAS Legal Services (North Bay)