



April 2, 2020

Governor Gavin Newsom
1303 10th Street, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Anthony Rendon
Speaker California State Assembly
State Capitol Room 219
Sacramento, CA 95814

Senator Toni Atkins
President Pro Tem
State Capitol, Room 205
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: COVID-19 and California Detention Facilities

Dear Governor Newsom, Pro Tem Atkins, Speaker Rendon, and Members of the Legislature:

We are writing to express our concerns with respect to the situation of immigrants in detention in California, and the looming threat of COVID-19 infections leading to a humanitarian catastrophe in these facilities. Despite the fact that immigrants in civil detention are under the jurisdiction of the federal government, **California has the legal authority and moral responsibility to protect the health and welfare of immigrants detained in our state.**

Faced with the current coronavirus pandemic, California must take immediate steps to prevent the unnecessary loss of human lives in immigration detention and surrounding communities, particularly in light of the federal government's perilous refusal to take action on the matter.

In order to address the current crisis, specific policy changes must take place. We urge emergency action on the following issues.

Recommendations for COVID-19 Response

- **Mandate minimum standards and oversight for detention facilities**
- **Ensure access to counsel & oversight in facilities**
- **Support detention release efforts**

Immigrant detention centers operating in California must be held accountable for violations of human rights and the treatment of detainees. To achieve this, the state must require by law that all private operators comply with conditions standards enumerated in their own contracts. The

state must also create a civil cause of action for any violations of these standards based on negligence.

California must likewise ensure that those inside these facilities are provided access to legal representatives, including attorneys coordinating release efforts. Legal access to these facilities stands paramount in the current circumstances, and should be protected and coordinated in partnership with the state. In addition, California must use its ability to conduct meaningful inspections and oversight for health, safety and due process in these facilities.

Lastly, California must support statewide efforts to coordinate the release of individuals in immigrant detention. ICE has failed to exercise discretion to release individuals from detention facilities, as a result attorneys and advocates have launched a comprehensive effort to secure legal relief and ensure the release of those detained. The state should partner with legal and community-based organizations in undertaking these efforts.

Sincerely,

Immigrant Defense Advocates

Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)

PICO California

Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice

NextGen California

Centro Legal de la Raza

California Immigrant Policy Center

Immigrant Legal Resource Center

Pacifica Social Justice

Central American Resource Center - CARECEN- of California

Central Valley Immigrant Integration Collaborative (CVIIC)

OneJustice

CRLA Foundation

Sacramento Immigration Coalition

Public Law Center
California Collaborative for Immigrant Justice
Immigrant Legal Defense
Pangea Legal Services
San Bernardino Community Service Center, Inc.
Jewish Family Service of San Diego
Public Counsel
Dolores Street Community Services
Services, Immigrant Rights & Education Network (SIREN)
Resilience Orange County
Secure Justice
NorCal Resist
Jewish Action NorCal
Esperanza Immigrant Rights Project
San Joaquin College of Law- New American Legal Clinic
Central American Resource Center --CARECEN SF
Coastside Immigrant Advocacy Group
San Francisco Rapid Response Network
Alianza Sacramento
Faith in Action Bay Area
Step Up!
Orange County Justice Fund