



YOUTH LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Use Your Voice

March 20th, 2023

The Honorable Reginald Jones-Sawyer
Chair, Assembly Public Safety Committee
Sacramento, California 95814

Re: AB 1226 (Haney)—SUPPORT

DEAR ASSEMBLYMEMBER JONES-SAWYER,

On behalf of Youth Leadership Institute, I am requesting your “Aye” vote on AB 1226 (Haney), which requires the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitations (CDCR) to respect the rights of minor children to remain in contact with their incarcerated parents. CDCR would be required to place an incarcerated parent, legal guardian, or caregiver of a minor in the correctional facility as close to a child’s home as possible.

yli partners with thousands of youth across the state, the majority of whom are low-income youth of color. Many of them bear the brunt of our state’s harmful “justice” system, not least of which is the traumatizing experience of being separated from parents and caretakers.

Parents and caregivers play a critical role in the development of their children. Data shows that up until the age of 18, frequent contact between the child and their parent is crucial for the child’s behavioral and emotional development.

Currently, about 195,000 children have incarcerated parents in California state prisons. Due to sudden separation from their caregiver, children with incarcerated parents experience unique issues

such as antisocial behavior and drug abuse. However, children who are able to maintain contact with their parents experience less severe harmful impacts.

Additionally, incarcerated parents who participate in family visitation programs have lower rates of parole violation and recidivism after release. Regular contact between children and their incarcerated parents also improves family reunification following the parent's release from prison.

Under current CDCR practices, the incarcerated parent's family location is taken into consideration. However, there is no law that requires CDCR to place a parent close to their minor child and many families end up hundreds of miles apart from each other.

Being incarcerated long distances from home is the number one barrier to families with minor children staying in contact with one another.

In 2019, CDCR released information that said only 25% of incarcerated people in California state prisons are placed in institutions less than 100 miles from their home. The long distances place a burden on families who do not have the financial means or the time to travel across the state for family visits.

Visitation falls off significantly the farther from home a person is incarcerated. 50% of people placed less than 50 miles away from home receive frequent family visitation, but only 15% of people placed 500 miles away receive visitors.

Incarcerated mothers in particular, struggle to maintain contact with their children. More than half of incarcerated mothers do not receive any visits from their children while they are in prison. The single most significant reason for lack of contact is the children's distance from their mothers' prisons, many of which are located far from major population centers.

AB 1226 removes contact barriers between children and their incarcerated parents or caregivers by requiring CDCR to assign the incarcerated person to serve their term in the institution closest to their minor child's home.

For these reasons, Youth Leadership Institute supports AB 1226 and respectfully requests your "Aye" vote.

Should you have any questions, please contact me at pbarahona@yli.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'PB', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

PATRICIA BARAHONA
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Youth Leadership Institute

CC: Yasamin Salari, Legislative Aide, Assemblymember Haney's Office:
Yasamin.Salari@asm.ca.gov