



# YOUTH LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

## Use Your Voice

September 25th, 2023

The Honorable Gavin Newsom  
Governor of California  
1021 O Street, Suite 9000  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
ATTN: Legislative Unit, Jessica Devencenzi

**Subject: SB 545 (Rubio) The SAFE Children Act – Request for Signature**

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of Youth Leadership Institute, we are proud to support Senate Bill 545 – the SAFE Children Act – by Senator Rubio and respectfully request your signature.

SB 545 will provide minors who are victims of sex trafficking or sexual abuse and fight back against their abusers with the opportunity to heal from their traumas with treatment and services in the juvenile court system, instead of trying them as adults in the criminal court system and sending them to prison. If SB 545 becomes law, California would be the first state in the nation to end the practice of transferring children into the adult criminal justice system for violent offenses, including homicide, when the offense is committed against the child's trafficker or abuser.

Under existing law, prosecutors can request that a juvenile court transfer a minor age 15 or older to the jurisdiction of the criminal court if the minor is alleged to have committed certain crimes. This process has resulted in several children who attacked their abusers to have their cases transferred to adult court, where these children who have been traumatized and victimized by adult predators find themselves traumatized a second time by

being tried as adults and sentenced to long terms in prison for attacking their abusers.

SB 545 would help ensure that these children who fight back against their abusers never have to experience unnecessary decades of trauma in adult prison. SB 545 does this by declaring the intent of the Legislature that children in these circumstances are victims and prohibiting juvenile courts from transferring these children to the jurisdiction of the criminal court unless the prosecution can show by clear and convincing evidence that the person the child attacked had not trafficked, sexually abused, or sexually battered them. By keeping these children within the jurisdiction of the juvenile court, the SAFE Children Act will save so many children from a cycle of trauma.

SB 545 also provides an important update to the process of transferring a child to the jurisdiction of the adult criminal court. Under current law, the judge may consider a number of specified factors relating to a child's background, including their trauma history, and involvement in the foster care system. SB 545 would *require* the judge to consider these factors when deciding whether to transfer the child to the adult criminal court, ensuring that every child's trauma history and other relevant experiences are taken into account by the judge.

For these reasons, Youth Leadership Institute respectfully requests that you sign this important bill into law.

Sincerely,

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

PATRICIA BARAHONA  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
Youth Leadership Institute

cc: Senator Susan Rubio