



YOUTH LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Use Your Voice

April 15th, 2025

Honorable Nick Schultz
California Assembly Member
Chair, Assembly Public Safety Committee
1020 N Street, Room 111
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Assembly Bill 1437 (Macedo) – OPPOSE

Dear Chairperson Schultz,

On behalf of **Youth Leadership Institute**, I write to oppose Assembly Bill 1437 (Macedo), a bill that would reinstate a failed policy that California lawmakers wisely chose to abandon in 2020. AB 1437 would require youth adjudicated of certain sexual offenses to register upon their release from a secure youth treatment facility. This law has no reliable justification, would harm rather than protect our communities, and would waste California's limited resources.

After decades of state and federal registration requirements and studies of their effects, multi-disciplinary expert bodies all agree that registration of youth who have committed sexual offenses is a failed policy. The international Association for the Treatment and Prevention of Sexual Abuse (ATSA) unequivocally declares that laws that require youth to register as sexual offenders do not make society safer and should be eliminated.¹ The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health actively advocates for the removal of youth registration requirements.² In 2019, California's own experts, the CA Sex Offender Management Board (CASOMB), issued the following recommendation: "With community safety as the primary focus, we now recommend ending registration entirely for juveniles."³ Importantly, CASOMB specifically considered whether to recommend restricting registration to youth assessed as high risk (as AB 1437 purportedly attempts to do). They ultimately rejected that idea: "The ultimate conclusion after extensive review of relevant studies is that eliminating juvenile registration entirely is the evidence-based course of action."⁴

Assembly Bill 1437 will not improve public safety. Registration does not reduce recidivism⁵; nor does it deter future crime⁶. Moreover, registries are not helpful tools for law enforcement to investigate sex crimes. According to one study, a juvenile registry would not provide the police a “reliable group of potential suspects” because a prediction made about adult sex recidivism risk “would be wrong about 98 percent of the time.”⁷ Registries are motivated by the false assumption that youth who commit sexual offenses are highly likely to recommit sexual offenses and consequently require a higher degree of surveillance. In fact, sexual recidivism rates among youth are exceptionally low (below 3%),⁸ and sexual offending during childhood or adolescence does not predict adult sexual offending.⁹

Contrary to popular belief, youth registries cause harm while doing nothing to prevent harm. Registration increases the likelihood that young people will experience physical and sexual violence. For example, in one study, registered youth were nearly twice as likely to have experienced an unwanted sexual assault that involved contact or penetration in the past year, and were five times as likely to report having been approached by an adult for sex in the past year.¹⁰ Registered youth were also four times more likely to attempt suicide. Moreover, there is ample evidence that registration imposes destructive and counterproductive obstacles to education, housing, and employment, and disproportionately impacts Black, Brown, Indigenous and LGBTQ+ youth.

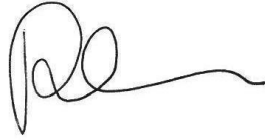
Passing AB 1437 would squander the valuable resources California has already invested in developing a system of evidenced-based interventions that would promote community safety by preventing sexual abuse. Following this legislature’s directive in 2018, the CASOMB engaged in an in-depth study that led to a detailed set of *Juvenile Recommendations* issued by the Board in 2019, as well as the *2022 CASOMB Guidelines for Treating and Supervising Youth Who Have Committed a Sexual Offense*. California legislators who want to prevent new sexual offenses should partner with the state’s leading experts (including CASOMB) to allocate the state resources and jurisdictional powers needed to implement research-based policies.

yli partners with thousands of youth across the state, the majority of whom are low-income youth of color. We witness first hand the brutal impacts of our state’s harmful “justice” system on their lives, and are staunch advocates of measures that will reduce the criminalization and incarceration of our communities.

For these reasons, **Youth Leadership Institute** opposes AB 1437 (Macedo) and urges you to affirm the previous deliberate, evidence-based decision of CA’s leaders to abandon the failed policy of youth registration. Please vote

“NO” when AB 1437 comes before you in the Assembly Public Safety Committee. For more information about our organization or position, please contact me at pbarahona@yli.org.

Sincerely,



PATRICIA BARAHONA
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Youth Leadership Institute

¹ See Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (ATSA). (2020). Registration and community notification of children and adolescents adjudicated of a sexual crime: Recommendations for evidence-based reform, p. 3.

<https://members.atsa.com/ap/CloudFile/Download/p5eBkN0p>.

² See official website for the Moore Center for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

<https://publichealth.jhu.edu/moore-center-for-the-prevention-of-child-sexual-abuse/news-and-media/headlines>

³ See California Sex Offender Management Board. (2019). Juvenile Recommendations, p. 19.

https://casomb.org/pdf/CASOMB_Juvenile_Recommendations_January_2019.pdf.

⁴ Ibid., p. 21.

⁵ See, for example, Elizabeth Letourneau & Kevin Armstrong. (2008). *Recidivism Rates for Registered and Nonregistered Juvenile Sexual Offenders*. (“Results generally failed to support the effectiveness of [U.S. registration policy], operationalized as reduced recidivism by juvenile sexual offenders.”)

⁶ See, for example, Elizabeth J. Letourneau, Dipankar Bandyopadhyay, Kevin S. Armstrong & Debajyoti Sinha, *Do Sex Offender Registration and Notification Requirements Deter Juvenile Sex Crimes?*, 37 CRIM. JUST. & BEHAV. 553, 564 (2010) (“ This is the first study to address the question, Do SORN requirements deter juvenile sex crimes? The answer is, in a word, no.”)

⁷ See Franklin E. Zimring, Wesley G. Jennings, Alex R. Piquero & Stephanie Hays, *Investigating the Continuity of Sex Offending: Evidence from the Second Philadelphia Birth Cohort*, 26 JUST. Q. 58, 71 (2009).

⁸ See, for example, Michael F. Caldwell, *Quantifying the Decline in Juvenile Sexual Recidivism Rates*, 22 PSYCH. PUB. POL’Y & L. 414, 419 (2016) (“The 33 studies conducted over the past 15 years reported a mean sexual recidivism rate of 2.75%. This suggests that the most current sexual recidivism rate is likely to be below 3%.”).

⁹ See, for example, Note 7, p 58.

¹⁰ See Elizabeth J. Letourneau, Andrew J. Harris, Ryan T. Shield, Scott M. Wakefield, Amanda E. Ruzicka, Cierra Buckman, Geoffrey D. Khan & Reshmi Nair, *Effects of Juvenile Sex Offender Registration on Adolescent Well-Being: An Empirical Examination*, 24 PSYCH. PUB. POLY & L. 105, 114 (2018).