



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