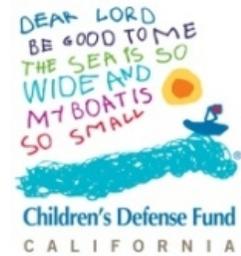


May 23, 2012

Honorable Kevin De León
State Capitol, Room 5108
Sacramento, CA 95814
Tel: (916) 651-4022
Fax: (916) 327-8817



RE: SB 1064 (De León) Reuniting Immigrant Families Act—SUPPORT

Dear Senator De León:

The Children's Defense Fund-California (CDF-CA) strongly supports SB 1064, which would keep immigrant families together by creating uniform child welfare policies across the state.

CDF-CA is a children's advocacy organization committed to ensuring every child a *Fair Start* in life and a successful passage to adulthood. We also work to ensure every child a *Safe Start* in a permanent nurturing family and community. SB 1064 helps children maintain family, and oftentimes community, connections. There is strong evidence that children in the child welfare system who are placed with family experience greater stability, have fewer behavioral problems, and are just as safe-if not safer-than children in non-relative care.

Currently there are at least 5,100 children nationwide in the child welfare system because their parents are under immigration custody or have been deported. This number is expected to rise to 15,000 in the next five years. Unfortunately many of them will never have a realistic opportunity to be reunified with their parents because parents in immigration detention are frequently unable to access services and meet requirements set out by dependency courts to regain custody of their children. This is further complicated by a parent's deportation because of the difficulty in making arrangements in the country of origin. Repeatedly, though immigrant relatives may be willing to take custody of a child when a parent is in this situation, they are turned down by the child welfare system because of their immigration status.

This bill is an important step in the right direction to ensure that families stay together and every child in California grows up in a loving and stable home. By ensuring parents are given a reasonable opportunity to fulfill their family reunification plan and that immigrant relative placements are understood to be a viable option, families will more likely be reunited. In the short-term SB 1064 allows children of deported parents to live with family members regardless of their immigration status, and in the long-term it prevents children of deported parents from staying in the child welfare system to instead be reunified with relatives whenever possible.

We thank Senator De León for his leadership for proposing this legislation. Please call me directly at (213) 201-0831 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Angelica Salazar
Policy Associate
Children's Defense Fund-California