

**Los Angeles Dependency Lawyers, Inc.
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Senator Kevin de León
State Capitol, Room 5108
Sacramento, California 95814

May 16, 2012

Dear Senator de León:

The passage of Assembly Bill 2070 in 2008 and the resulting amendments to the Welfare and Institutions Code was an overdue recognition of the increase in the number of children with incarcerated parents and the specific needs presented by these families. Although parents who are incarcerated by Immigration and Customs Enforcement fall under the umbrella of the incarcerated parent amendments to the law, their needs go far and beyond those of a parent incarcerated in state or local custody. On behalf of Los Angeles Dependency Lawyers, Inc., the public agency charged with representation of parents involved in the largest dependency system in California, I fully support the passage of Senate Bill 1064.

As of December 31, 2009, there were 1.2 million incarcerated parents in the United States. Of that total, there were 83,000 parents incarcerated in state and local prisons in California and 11,000 parents incarcerated in Los Angeles County alone.¹ In reality, the number of incarcerated parents in Los Angeles County is much higher, as the local numbers do not include parents who are in the custody of ICE. These parents are differently situated than parents who are incarcerated in state or local prisons. For these parents, the isolation and the opportunity to merely participate in hearings concerning their children are insurmountable obstacles.

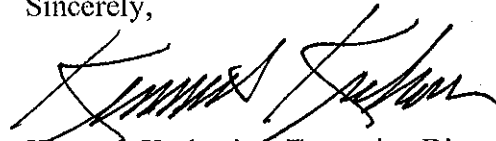
Senate Bill 1064, as you know, provides for additional reunification time for parents who are in the custody of ICE or have been deported and provides important safeguards to maintaining familial ties. Our dependency system mandates preservation of the family wherever possible and Senate Bill 1064 ensures the goal of preservation even for undocumented families. In our view, Senate Bill 1064 carves out appropriate and necessary changes to the dependency system to reflect the needs of parents embroiled in a situation that has been described as the "black hole." Parents who are in ICE custody cannot come to court to meet with their attorney, see their children, or most importantly, participate in proceedings. Parents who have been deported are often ignored by the

¹ Source: (2010), *The Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents*, "How Many Are There?"

system as viable reunification or placement prospects, or are completely left out of the proceedings as whereabouts unknown. The preference for placement with relatives is ignored or simply too much work for the Department and the court where a relative is undocumented.

Recognition of "the family" without reference to incarceration or immigration status should be the cornerstone of our dependency system. Senate Bill 1064 is a positive step towards that goal. Thank you for your efforts on behalf of the thousands of children and parents who will benefit from the changes to our system Senate Bill 1064 seeks to bring about.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kenneth Krekorian". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "K".

Kenneth Krekorian, Executive Director
Los Angeles Dependency Lawyers, Inc.