



DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS CHAIR

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DISTRICT 64

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Asm. Gipson with Quinto Family Introduces Bill Separating Coroners' Offices from Sheriff's Departments in California

AB 1608 co-sponsored by Angelo Quinto Family after death of their son in law enforcement custody

SACRAMENTO, Calif (January 6, 2022) – In his first action for the 2022 legislative session, **Select Committee on Police Reform Chair Mike A. Gipson (D-Carson)** introduced **AB 1608**, a bill focused on greater transparency in law enforcement. AB 1608 would separate Coroner's offices from Sheriff's departments in counties across the state. AB 1608 is joint-authored by Assemblymember Dr. Akilah Weber, co-authored by Senator Dr. Richard Pan, and co-sponsored by the Justice for Angelo Quinto Coalition, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) California Action, California Immigrant Policy Center (CIPC), Secure Justice, and Union of American Physicians and Dentists (UAPD).

AB 1608 stems from two bills, AB 1196 (Gipson) and AB 490 (Gipson), which the Governor signed in light of the tragic death of George Floyd and Angelo Quinto. AB 1196 bans law enforcement from using any chokehold, including carotid restraints. AB 490, which followed AB 1196, prohibits law enforcement from using restraints that cause positional asphyxia - a deadly condition that can occur when a person being restrained cannot get enough oxygen.

As a follow-up to these law enforcement reform measures, AB 1608 will serve as a building block to create complete transparency in determining the cause of death of an individual who dies in police custody. AB 1608 will provide families with the peace of mind that these investigations and processes are done righteously and fairly.

"I want to commend the Quinto family for their perseverance and tireless advocacy with the passage of AB 490, which went into effect on Jan.1, 2022," said **Assemblymember Mike A. Gipson**. "The path towards justice certainly takes a village. Our efforts thus far have been based on need. We need police reform and full transparency in all processes. This year, we are continuing our efforts by introducing legislation that would separate Coroners' offices from the Sheriff's departments in counties across the state. This work will be complete when families can rest easy knowing their loved ones are safe from harm from those who took an oath of office to protect them and until we have transparency systems that ensure justice after a tragedy or death occurs. This bill would ensure that death investigations are conducted objectively, reducing any perception that the investigative process could be influenced by other segments of the criminal justice system."

"I am proud to be a joint author on this important transparency bill," said **Assemblymember Dr. Akilah Weber**. "Too often, families like Angelo Quinto's and many others don't receive the closure they desperately need to heal after the loss of a loved one."

"Angelo's death has caused us immeasurable sadness, but what compounded it was the subsequent cover-up," said **Cassandra Quinto, Mother of Angelo Quinto**. "Video evidence and witness testimony should not be the only way to convey more than one narrative. Objectivity in these processes should be the standard. Having an independent coroner would have made covering up Angelo's cause of death much more difficult. Impartiality, transparency, and adherence to the rule of law are not too much to ask. A Coroner's office separate from the Sheriff's department makes perfect sense. We all need a fair, impartial, and transparent system of justice."

"I am hopeful that AB 1608 can bring some more much-needed and overdue change to the systems that do not serve us," said **Bella Quinto, Sister of Angelo Quinto**. "I lost my brother, Angelo Quinto, over a year ago. Since then, the lack of independence between the Coroner's and Sheriff's offices has made objective investigation impossible. This legislation will help create a system that prioritizes objectivity, transparency, and accountability."

"We are grateful to Asm. Gipson for introducing this bill, as it provides a solution to an obvious conflict of interest that arises when Sheriffs investigate themselves during officer-involved shootings," said **Brian Hofer, Executive Director of Secure Justice**.

"For decades, the unchecked power of the sheriff—an elected position—has disproportionately harmed immigrants and communities of color," said **Shiu-Ming Cheer, CIPC's Deputy Director of Programs**. "Sheriff's offices are politically powerful, allowing them to sidestep most attempts at oversight or accountability. We stand in strong support of AB 1608, which is a step towards correcting the injustices that occur when Sheriffs run Coroner's offices. We must continue to work to hold law enforcement accountable and move toward meaningful investments in communities."

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