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Date

The Honorable Tina McKinnor
California State Assembly
1021 O Street, Room 5520
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 970 (McKinnor) SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember McKinnor:

On behalf of the Members of the (ORGANIZATION), I am writing to express our strong support of AB 970 (McKinnor), which would establish a two-year pilot of the Enhanced Child Abuse Reporting Pilot Program (Pilot Program) in Los Angeles County.

The Pilot Program would consist of improved mandated reporter training, the use of a standardized decision-support tool (decision tree) by mandated reporters to support their decision making about when a report to the child protective services agency or law enforcement is required by state law, and a mechanism for referring families to a community-based services provider for supportive resources when a report to the county child protection hotline or law enforcement is not required by state law. The legislation would also include an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Pilot Program, including its impacts on child safety, mandated reporter decision-making, and family utilization of community-based supportive resources.

Current law requires mandated reporters to report to a county child protection hotline or a law enforcement agency any known or reasonable suspicion of child abuse and/or neglect. Despite having this important responsibility mandated reporters often receive inadequate training and support with decision making, leaving them unprepared to make sound decisions about when to make a report.

Mandated reporter decision-making is often influenced by bias, fear, and other factors that are distinct from concerns about child safety. Well-intentioned mandated reporters may believe that making a report to the county child protection hotline is the best way to connect a family in need to supportive resources. This creates trauma and fear, and erodes trust in the organizations families should turn to in times of need, making them hesitant to seek help in the future.

Over-reporting also contributes to racial disproportionality of Black and Native American children in the child welfare system. For instance, a recent study found that in California, 50% of Black and Native American children are investigated by CPS by their 18th birthday[1]. In comparison, only 25% of White children face CPS investigations by the time they turn 18.

[1] Putnam-Hornstein, et. al, Cumulative Rates of Child Protection Involvement and Terminations of Parental Rights in a California Birth Cohort, 1999–2017

(DISCUSS WHY YOU AND/OR YOUR ORGANIZATION SUPPORT THIS BILL.)

By implementing the Pilot Program, Los Angeles County would ensure that mandated reporters are adequately trained, equipped, and supported to make sound decisions about reporting known or suspected child abuse and/or neglect. The Pilot Program will prioritize child safety and link families to supportive resources upstream to prevent future child abuse and/or neglect and promote family well-being.

Thank you for your continued leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,

NAME
ORGANIZATION
CONTACT INFORMATION

cc: The Honorable (Chair Name), Chair, (Name of Committee)
Members of the (Name of Committee)