



PRESS RELEASE

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Sexually Exploited Children Will No Longer Slip through the Cracks

SACRAMENTO, Calif --- Governor Brown just signed a bill by Assemblymember Gipson that will close a loophole regarding the provision of extended foster care benefits for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children, commonly referred to as CSEC youth.

Over the past few years, instead of simply detaining youth who are victims of sex trafficking, California has begun linking these youth to the child welfare system (making them dependents of the court) connecting them to foster care and additional support services. By going through foster care, CSEC youth between 18-21 years of age are eligible for extended foster care benefits, which provide housing assistance, financial aid and employment training. However, as a result of the recent decriminalization of prostitution for minors, when CSEC youth appeal the court to have their criminal record dropped, they also forgo their placement as a dependent of the court and lose their eligibility for extended foster care benefits.

“We have to do everything we can to support victims of sex trafficking, especially those who are young and end up in a dire position that was imposed on them by their environment,” stated Gipson. “These youth would otherwise be qualified, but due to technicalities in the law, they are forced to choose between having a clean criminal record or receiving vital transitional benefits. I am proud to be able to use my position to elevate this issue and work with the Legislature and Governor to bring about a solution. We have a moral responsibility and obligation to protect our most vulnerable.”

Now that AB 604 has been chaptered into state law, CSEC youth can petition the court to have their criminal record vacated and also resume their status as a dependent of the court for purposes of receiving transitional benefits.

This bill was sponsored by the California Coalition for Youth (CCY) which is a nonprofit organization that serves disconnected youth ages 12-24 throughout the state. “We are pleased to be able to provide a solution to youth who have survived human trafficking to be able to continue to access extended foster care,” stated Kevin McAllister, Executive Director for CCY. “We thank the Governor for signing this bill into law and Assemblymember Gipson for his leadership on this issue.”

Mike A. Gipson represents the 64th Assembly District that includes the communities of Carson, Compton, Gardena, Harbor Gateway, Lynwood, North Long Beach, Rancho Dominguez, South Los Angeles, Torrance, Watts/Willowbrook and Wilmington.