



April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Assemblymember Reginald Byron Jones-Sawyer, Chair  
Assembly Public Safety Committee  
Legislative Office Building  
1020 N Street, Room 111  
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support for AB 2250 (Bonta)

Dear Assemblymember Jones-Sawyer,

On behalf of the California Innocence Coalition, we write in support of AB 2250 (Bonta), a bill to create a pilot program to provide vital support to women in reentry. AB 2250 is an important step in mitigating the harmful effects of mass incarceration on America's fastest growing prison population.

The California Innocence Coalition (CIC) consists of the three innocence projects in California: the California Innocence Project, the Northern California Innocence Project and the Loyola Project for the Innocent. The mission of our projects is to protect the rights of the innocent by litigating their cases to bring them home and to promote a fair and effective criminal legal system by advocating for change in California laws and policy. Collectively, the California Innocence Coalition has won the freedom of over 70 wrongly imprisoned individuals who collectively lost over 800 years in prison for crimes they did not commit.

AB 2250 will create a pilot program for women being released from prison that would, among other things, be responsive to each woman's gender and culture, create an individualized reentry program, develop professional skills, provide assistance in the form of subsidies, and focus on family reunification, as provided. Further, this bill ends the use of solitary confinement for special populations, including those with disabilities, pregnant women, youth, elderly, and other special populations.

Women are the fastest growing incarcerated population, increasing at a rate of 50% more than their male counterparts for 40 years.<sup>1</sup> In California, the number of women in prison has ballooned by 433% since 1980.<sup>2</sup> While African Americans only make up 5.7% of California's population, they represent 25.9% of the prison population - a rate of 171 per 100,000. For comparison, white women are incarcerated at a rate of 30 per 100,000. Latina women are incarcerated at a rate of 38 per 100,000.<sup>3</sup> This glaring racial disparity points to structural racism and criminalization of BIPOC women.

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<sup>1</sup> [The Sentencing Project, \*Incarcerated Women and Girls\*, November 24, 2020.](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Vera Institute of Justice, \*Incarceration Trends in California\*, December 2019.](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Public Policy Institute of California, \*California's Prison Population\*, July 2019.](#)

An essential component of California's efforts to reduce the prison population must be ensuring that people coming home from prison are well supported to be successful upon release. Historically, reentry services have been overstretched and underfunded. AB 2250 represents an important shift in state policy and will help lead us in the right direction.

While formerly incarcerated women are actively trying to be self-supporting members of society, they also face the additional burden of being sole providers for their children and other family members. Reentry resources are typically built with men in mind and lack the trauma-informed, nuanced care that reentering women need. Incarcerated women have survived extreme rates of poverty, violence, and trauma, and most incarcerated women are mothers. These challenges directly impact women's economic position and potential. Incarceration, exacerbated by a lack of meaningful, trauma-informed, healing centered programs, undermines the ability of women to successfully reenter society, find a living wage job and safe housing, and reconnect with their families.

Because AB 2250 represents the shift to more holistic and supportive model that is so desperately needed to ensure successful reentry and long term wellbeing in our communities as we continue to decrease our incarcerated population, we respectfully urge your "AYE" vote on AB 2250 (Bonta) when it comes before you in the Assembly Public Safety Committee. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,  
The California Innocence Coalition



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Cc: Efrain Botello-Cisneros, Office of Assemblymember Bonta