



Tuesday, March 29, 2022

Senate Committee on Governmental Organization
California State Senate
1020 N Street, Room 584
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 993 (Skinner) – Victims Services and Support for All – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Dodd:

The California Innocence Coalition (CIC) writes to you in support of Senate Bill (SB) 993 (Skinner), which concerns the processes for compensating crime victims and those erroneously convicted.

The 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. Our dual mission begins with exonerating wrongly convicted individuals; we then leverage our expert knowledge of wrongful convictions to identify good sense reforms that ensure justice for innocent Californians. CIC has won the freedom of over 70 wrongly imprisoned individuals who collectively lost over 800 years in prison for crimes they did not commit.

SB 993 contains various meaningful provisions, many of which bring much needed justice for crime victims' with respect to the compensation they deserve. Additionally, as experts in wrongful convictions, we are exceedingly supportive of SB 993 for its recognition of wrongfully incarcerated Californians as victims of the system and as deserving increased measures of fairness when it comes to being compensated for their wrongful conviction.

California has long recognized its obligation to compensate the innocent for their wrongful incarceration. Nevertheless, when litigating through the Victims Compensation Board (VCB), wrongfully convicted people must prove, amongst other things, that they sustained an injury through their erroneous conviction in order to receive compensation. SB 993 would remove this proof-of-injury requirement. This good sense amendment recognizes that anyone who has lost years of their life wrongfully incarcerated has surely been harmed.

SB 993 also expands the financial resources available to the wrongfully convicted. The processes of both overturning a conviction and then receiving compensation can be incredibly costly for the wrongfully convicted, many of whom find themselves footing the bill for years of legal services. We at the CIC offer our services *pro bono* precisely because we believe that an exoneration should never leave the wrongfully incarcerated in a state of financial hardship. We believe such financial burdens only compound the injustice our clients have endured. SB 993 would help prevent this compounding effect by allowing exonerees to recover reasonable attorney fees and costs, related to overturning their conviction as well as litigating their claims for compensation.

Finally, while existing law allows exonerees to file for compensation of \$140 per day of incarceration, there is no such relief available for years wrongly spent on parole or supervised release. By allowing exonerees to receive \$70 per day served on parole or supervised release, SB 993 would better ensure that wrongfully convicted individuals are compensated for the entirety of their wrongful subjugation to criminal justice supervision. This would also make California consistent with other states like Texas and Kansas. The wrongfully convicted have not only had to survive incarceration, but also have had to survive years facing negative stigmas in society, lost job opportunities, housing and relationships because of their wrongful conviction.

The wrongfully convicted have lost years of their lives due to their incarceration and years in litigation proving their innocence in the Courts and SB 993 is another step towards giving these people a fair shake at a successful transition home. For these reasons, we strongly support SB 993.

Sincerely,
The California Innocence Coalition



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