

PRESS RELEASE

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Gipson Introduces Bill to Stop Criminalization of Foster Youth

AB 2605 would ensure youth receive appropriate behavior management interventions in foster care facilities

SACRAMENTO, Calif --- Today, Assemblymember Mike A. Gipson (D-Carson) introduced an important bill to ensure that group homes and foster care facilities are only allowed to call law enforcement on foster youth when there is a true emergency.

Specifically, AB 2605 would create a three-year moratorium on non-mandated law enforcement calls by foster care facilities for behavioral management of youth in non-emergency situations. This bill also requires each facility to change its emergency intervention plan to provide specific guidance on when and when not to call law enforcement and must specify behavior management interventions.

"Having served in law enforcement, I have seen how young people get trapped in the juvenile justice system because of minor incidents charged against them. Group homes are given extra resources to manage behavioral problems in their facilities and should absolutely be using them to provide appropriate care. The first response to a child poking a caregiver with a candy cane, for example, should never be a call to law enforcement," said Asm. Gipson. "These youth have faced significant trauma in their lifetimes and deserve better than to be sent to juvenile hall as a time out. AB 2605 will ensure that foster care facilities are responding to behavioral issues appropriately."

Foster care facilities continue to rely on law enforcement as the primary behavior management response to minor incidents. In 2016, of the 6,217 non-mandated calls statewide for youth behavior, 60% were for non-aggressive behavior. The calls resulted in 435 youth being cited, 527 youth being detained or arrested, and another 319 youth being booked into juvenile hall.

"This bill makes clear that reliance on law enforcement as a behavioral management response to children who have been abused and neglected is inconsistent with the goal of our state's child welfare system," said Jennifer Rodriguez, Executive Director of the Youth Law Center. "Good parenting of youth in foster care never involves relying on the police to be the disciplinarian when there are minor incidents. A moratorium on calls to law enforcement will compel foster care facilities to use appropriate responses that help rather than harm foster youth."

AB 2605 is sponsored by the Youth Law Center and supported by the National Center for Youth Law. This measure is currently awaiting assignment by the Assembly Rules Committee.

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