

April 29, 2021

The Honorable Mike McGuire  
Chair, Senate Committee on Governance and Finance  
State Capitol, Room 408  
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Senate Bill 271 (Wiener) The Sheriff Democracy and Diversity Act - COSPONSOR

**Dear Chair McGuire,**

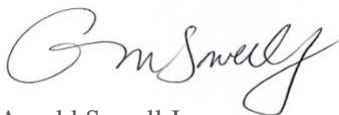
NextGen California respectfully requests your support of SB 271 (Wiener), which will restore California's previous, long-standing eligibility criteria for candidates seeking the office of Sheriff, enabling voters to choose from a much broader pool of candidates.

In 1989, California narrowed the eligibility requirements for Sheriff candidates by allowing only those with a Police Officers Standards and Training Academy certificate and specified paid law enforcement experience to run for the position. This effectively reduced competition, limited diversity, and prevented many qualified candidates from seeking the office. As the Legislature and the people of California have increasingly embraced new approaches to public safety, it is critical that we have an electoral process for Sheriff that fosters choice.

By expanding the pool of candidates beyond those with a law enforcement background, SB 271 will increase the probability of having a Sheriff with expertise in deescalating non-violent situations, who will implement state and local ordinances and reforms faithfully, and who has the skills and temperament to adeptly manage the bureaucracy they will lead. Broadening eligibility for Sheriff to all registered voters embraces the ideal of ultimately having more Sheriffs who come from and align with the goals of the communities they serve – whether they be former public defenders, judges, progressive prosecutors, or civic leaders.

NextGen California supports policies that reimagine public safety and reform our criminal justice system. For the above reasons, we respectfully request your “aye” vote on SB 271.

Sincerely,



Arnold Sowell Jr.  
Executive Director, NextGen California