

April 19, 2021

The Honorable Lisa Calderon
Chair, Assembly Committee on Human Services
1020 N Street Room 124
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Assembly Bill 47 (Reyes) Services for Children and Families Separated at the Border - SUPPORT as amended April 15

Dear Chair Calderon,

NextGen California respectfully requests your support of AB 47 (Reyes), which would create a program to coordinate existing services to families who were separated at the southern border because of the “zero tolerance” policy. Specifically, this bill directs the California Department of Social Services to establish a grant program for immigration support services, such as culturally sensitive health care, legal services, food, education resources, and housing resources.

According to a recent report by the Department of Justice, the “zero tolerance” policy, enacted under the previous presidential administration, separated more than 3,000 families at the southern border¹. Prior to this policy, families apprehended at the border would be placed in administrative deportation proceedings without referring the family’s adult individuals to the Department of Justice for criminal prosecution². However, the “zero tolerance” policy required adult individuals to be referred for criminal prosecution, resulting in the separation of thousands of families³.

This policy resulted in parents and children being held in separate detention facilities and an increased likelihood that they may never be reunited. These facilities are grossly overcrowded, understaffed, fail to provide adequate levels of basic necessities, and fail to provide adequate living conditions. These facilities have also failed to control outbreaks of infectious disease, such as the mumps and the flu. In fact, recent data shows that almost 600 people have tested positive for COVID-19 in California’s seven immigration detention centers⁴.

¹ https://oig.justice.gov/sites/default/files/reports/21-028_0.pdf

² Ibid.

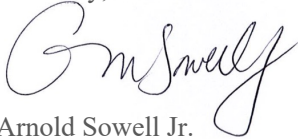
³ Ibid.

⁴ <https://calmatters.org/health/coronavirus/2021/02/immigrants-detention-centers-vaccine/>

AB 47 implements a program to assist families with accessing the existing services and benefits available to them. The program will award grants to qualifying nonprofit organizations to help families with accessing services such as housing and health care, in a culturally sensitive manner.

NextGen California remains severely troubled by the inhumane treatment of immigrants and their families in California's detention facilities. NextGen California is unrelenting in its commitment to support programs and policies that address these issues. AB 47 takes a strong step towards helping reunify families, providing these families access to essential services, and trying to rectify the injustices they may have encountered while detained. For the above reasons, NextGen California respectfully requests your "Aye" vote on AB 47.

Sincerely,



Arnold Sowell Jr.

Executive Director, NextGen California