



LOS ANGELES COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

SACRAMENTO LEGISLATIVE OFFICE

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August 4, 2022

The Honorable Susan Rubio
California State Senate
1021 O Street, Suite 8710
Sacramento, CA 95814

SENATE BILL 616 (SUSAN RUBIO) SUPPORT

Dear Senator Rubio:

The Los Angeles District Attorney's Office is pleased to support Senate Bill 616.

SB 616 would increase and expand domestic violence and child abuse training and education requirements for Family Court judges, referees, commissioners, mediators, child custody recommending counselors, and evaluators. SB 616 also clarifies that, when making child custody and visitation orders, the health, safety, and welfare of the child and the safety of all family members is paramount. Finally, SB 616 provides examples of prohibited family reunification services, which cannot be ordered as a part of a child custody or visitation proceeding, including reunification therapy, treatments, programs, workshops or camps that are predicated on cutting off a child from a parent with whom the child is bonded.

SB 616 would enact provisions from the recently reauthorized federal Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) that improve child safety laws in state family court proceedings. The VAWA includes provisions to provide states with additional federal funding if they improve child safety laws in family court. If SB 616 is enacted, it will make California eligible to receive a minimum of \$25 million in additional federal funding starting in 2023.

Far too often, children involved in contested custody and visitation matters in family court are subject to abuse, including child abuse, child sexual abuse, and exposure to domestic violence. Since 2008, 854 children have been murdered by an abusive parent during separation or divorce proceedings – 85 of these tragic deaths have occurred in California.

California has been a leader in establishing laws to protect children from these types of abuses, however children involved in family court disputes still experience harm that could potentially be prevented with more protective custody and visitation orders.

SB 616 will help reduce the number of children involved in family court proceedings from being victims of preventable abuse.

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If you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact Daniel Felizzatto in my Sacramento Legislative Office at (916) 442-0668.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gascón", written in a cursive style.

GEORGE GASCÓN
District Attorney