



LOS ANGELES COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

SACRAMENTO LEGISLATIVE OFFICE

GEORGE GASCÓN • District Attorney
SHARON L. WOO • Chief Deputy District Attorney
JOSEPH F. INIGUEZ • Chief of Staff

DANIEL FELIZZATTO • Legislative Advocate
TAMAR TOKAT • Legislative Advocate

June 22, 2022

The Honorable Chris Holden
California State Assembly
1021 O Street, Suite 5650
Sacramento, CA 95814

ASSEMBLY BILL 1737 (HOLDEN) SUPPORT

Dear Assembly Member Holden:

The Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office is pleased to support Assembly Bill 1737.

AB 1737 would add the term "children's camp" to the Health and Safety Code. A "children's camp" would be defined to mean "a camp that offers daytime or overnight experiences administered by adults who provide social, cultural, educational, recreational, or artistic programming to more than five children between 3 and 17 years of age for five days or longer during at least one season."

The addition "children's camps" to the Health and Safety Code is important because it addresses a loophole in existing law. Existing law establishes a regulatory framework for "organized camps," but only applies to sites that are established to provide an outdoor group living experience for five or more days a year. An alternative to these overnight camps is day camps (or children's camps, as this bill would define), which are generally local and do not provide multiple overnight stays for campers. Day camps often do not have a fixed site, but instead operate in parks, beaches, churches, schools, Boys and Girls Clubs or YMCA facilities, and are therefore not subject to the laws that regulate organized camps as currently defined.

While overnight camps are regulated to some degree in California, child day camps are not. Under state law, a camp is defined as a site established for the primary purpose of providing an outdoor group living experience for five days or more during one or more seasons of the year, which crucially leaves out day camps. California heavily regulates child day care centers where children enjoy low-risk activities like finger painting or sing-alongs but provide little to no regulation for day camps that provide a variety of high-risk activities.

AB 1737 also requires all camp staff, employees and volunteers to complete child neglect and abuse identification training. AB 1737 would also classify all camp administrators and full-time employees as mandated reporters of child neglect and abuse. All staff, employees and volunteers would also be required to complete a background check.

1100 K Street, Suite 404
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 442-0668
Fax: (916) 444-8729

June 22, 2022
Page Two

These provisions are important to protect vulnerable children who attend children's camps. Unfortunately, we are aware of situations in which innocent children have been physically and sexually abused and suffered serious preventable injuries while attending camps in California.

Child predators have exploited the deficiencies in existing law to prey on our innocent children. In 2017, a former San Jose camp counselor was found guilty of molesting multiple child victims. In 2018, a former San Mateo camp counselor plead no contest to molesting three 6-year old children and a fourth child at a summer camp. Existing law only mandates that an administrator of a camp report instances of abuse or neglect. These instances could have been avoided if the appropriate background checks had been performed and mandated reporter process implemented.

Our Office is proud to strongly support AB 1737 to protect children from sexual predators and child abuse.

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 blue ink, appearing to read "Gascón", written in a cursive style.

GEORGE GASCÓN
District Attorney