



**AB 2654: Gabriel's Law - State Child Death Review Council**

**Background**

On May 22, 2013, the Los Angeles County Fire Department responded to a call in East Palmdale, reporting that 8-year-old Gabriel Fernandez was not breathing. He was taken to the hospital with multiple injuries including a fractured skull, bruises, two missing teeth, broken ribs and burns. Gabriel passed away on May 24, 2013 after being tortured to death. We know this abuse was reported to both law enforcement and the Department of Child and Family Services.

His death has haunted the Antelope Valley and beyond. Thereafter, Los Angeles County formed the Blue Ribbon Commission on Child Protection to inwardly examine systems failure. This led to a series of alterations to policy with some still forthcoming. A suggestion widely maintained was to improve the interconnectivity of agencies.

The Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (ICAN) in Los Angeles County established the nation's first local Child Death Review Team in 1978. Other counties maintain these teams but not all; they are authorized but not mandated. These teams complete critical inquiries into incidents of child homicides and other preventable child fatalities, highlighting the risk factors to our vulnerable youth. They recommend changes to systems that come in contact with one another in their service to children. Their considerations for improvements are especially valuable because these systems are often operating siloed from one another.

**The Problem**

California is the only state in the nation without a state team examining trends in child fatalities. All other states and some countries have made this a priority. The mandate for the California State Child Death Review Council is contingent upon funding.

In 2008, this body disbanded due to a lack of prioritization.

ICAN has released a 30-year retrospective after reviewing nearly a thousand cases. Regionally, there has been success in curbing statistics over time. This highlights how expert analysis on this topic can be a lifesaving investment.

Due to the patchwork nature of our information, we lack a holistic understanding of the risk factors associated with children residing in different environments.

**Solution**

A statewide apparatus of experts that brings forward lessons learned from each of these tragic incidents would assist systems change to curb the number of child fatalities and near fatalities. It would better our understanding of the risk factors to vulnerable children, which would help ensure their protection.

**What This Bill Will Do**

This bill would remove the funding limitation and require operation of the California State Child Death Review Council. The council will meet quarterly and craft a biannual report. It will be enabled to complete these duties electronically.

**Sponsor**

Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect – Los Angeles (ICAN) & ICAN Associates

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