



**LOS ANGELES COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE**  
**SACRAMENTO LEGISLATIVE OFFICE**

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March 13, 2023

Senator Aisha Wahab  
Chair, Senate Public Safety Committee  
1020 N Street, Room 545  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**SENATE BILL 603**  
**SPONSOR**  
**Senate Public Safety Committee**

Dear Senator Wahab:

The Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office is pleased to sponsor Senate Bill 603(Rubio).

SB 603 aims to prevent the unauthorized release of child forensic interviews, which are recorded interviews of children conducted by specially trained forensic interviewers in cases involving suspected child abuse. During these interviews, children often disclose highly sensitive information related to physical and sexual abuse. Currently, California does not have clearly defined legal limits for the release of these recordings. This results in children's advocacy centers being directly subpoenaed for copies of these recordings without any guidelines on their distribution. There have been instances where once copies of these recording have been obtained from children's advocacy centers, they have been duplicated, copied, and re-distributed to individuals who should not have access to the recordings. This provides a daily challenge for children's advocacy centers throughout California who seek to protect the rights and privacy interests of these vulnerable victims.

SB 603 seeks to address this legal deficiency by giving victims of child abuse the privacy protection they need and deserve under California law. To that end, the bill proposes to amend Penal Code Section 11166.4 under the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act (CANRA). CANRA governs the responsibilities of children's advocacy centers and multidisciplinary teams, and it establishes rules for the manner in which forensic interviews may be conducted. Section 11164.4 establishes the confidential nature of information obtained by multidisciplinary teams in preparation for child forensic interviews and to provide services to the child or their family. However, it currently does not establish any guidelines for the distribution of these recordings once they have been directly subpoenaed from children's advocacy centers. It also does not establish any confidentiality rules or guidelines to protect these recordings from unnecessary duplication or distribution beyond what is necessary for investigation and litigation.

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Victims of child abuse are incredibly vulnerable and deserve significant protection under the law. SB 603 seeks to set consistent guidelines for the protection of child interviews conducted in response to suspected child abuse by statutorily mandating that such recordings only be released through an appropriate court order, with a protective order, and under limited circumstances.

The provisions of this bill are not novel. Similar rules are already in place for the release of suspected child abuse reports (SCARS) and suspect forensic examinations. Moreover, states such as Washington, Nebraska, and Tennessee have all codified protections for child forensic interviews. Additionally, in California, Alameda County has a local ordinance codifying such protections.

Nothing in this legislation would prevent the appropriate release of the recordings to counsel in both criminal and civil cases. SB 603 would not limit or hinder the ability of counsel to obtain these recordings as part of discovery or use them as part of their case. It would only limit their distribution beyond what is necessary for investigation and litigation via a protective order and would protect these sensitive recordings from a Public Records Act request. Significantly, the bill also preserves judicial discretion in situations where a court may find that a protective order is not appropriate in a particular case.

For these reasons, we respectfully request an **AYE** vote on SB 603.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Tamar Tokat in our Legislative Office at (916) 442-0668.

Very truly yours,

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

GEORGE GASCÓN  
District Attorney

cc: Senator Susan Rubio  
Members, Senate Public Safety Committee