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Under Trump Administration's Looming Threat of Increased Detention, Senator Lara Introduces Bill to Protect Detained Immigrants

Bill Comes on Heels of DHS Expert Recommendations to Sever Ties with Private Prison Companies

SACRAMENTO, CA – This morning, as part of a broader [#Fight4CA legislative package](#), Senator Lara (D-Bell Gardens) introduced the Dignity Not Detention Act, providing a crucial opportunity to address and improve upon the dire conditions facing thousands of immigrants in publicly- and privately-run immigration detention centers across the state. The Dignity Not Detention Act passed out of both legislative houses last session and was ultimately vetoed by Governor Brown, who cited potential national action by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as major reasoning. Today's introduced legislation is co-sponsored by the Immigrant Legal Resource Center and Community Initiatives for Visiting Immigrants in Confinement (CIVIC).

As we collectively acknowledge and seek to address our country's troubling reliance on mass incarceration, we must not turn our backs on the 40,000 men, women and children incarcerated in immigration detention centers across the country on any given day. This is a wide and varied population, from Haitian asylum seekers escaping the chaos of multiple natural disasters and Central American refugee children fleeing rampant violence on their own, to long-term lawful permanent residents at risk of being torn from their families for a single interaction with the criminal justice system. This is also a population that the next administration has both threatened and promised to increase by attempting to deport millions of immigrants who call our neighborhoods and communities home.

As the nation's most immigrant-rich state, California has a responsibility to proactively ensure that all current and potentially future detained immigrants are treated humanely and in environments that do not condone abuse, medical neglect or loss of life, as is currently the case.

"The Dignity Not Detention Act will not only allow California an opportunity to lead in setting a nationwide standard for humane care, it will also offer a model for severing the profit-fueled interests of private prison companies that drive the growth of the detained immigrant population through their use of bed quotas and other practices. We applaud Senator Lara's continued leadership on advocating for the dignity of detained immigrants across California, and look to Governor Brown to lead the nation by example in light of DHS's continued failure to act," notes **Grisel Ruiz, staff attorney at the Immigrant Legal Resource Center**.

This bill's timely introduction comes on the heels of last Thursday's controversial Homeland Security Advisory Council [committee vote](#) to recommend that the agency end its own use of privately-run immigration detention centers, as well as increase oversight and monitoring of Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE)'s detention practices. In August, the Department of Justice [announced](#) its own decision to phase out private prisons at the federal level, citing similar concerns around mistreatment and lack of oversight.

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About the Immigrant Legal Resource Center

The Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC) is a national nonprofit that works with immigrants, community organizations, legal professionals, law enforcement, and policy makers to build a democratic society that values diversity and the rights of all people. Through community education programs, legal training & technical assistance, and policy development & advocacy, the ILRC's mission is to protect and defend the fundamental rights of immigrant families and communities. www.ilrc.org