Update to Supporters from Friends Committee on Legislation of California

February 7, 2022

Here in Sacramento the second year of this two-year session is well underway, and thanks to you and others in our community, FCLCA is actively advocating both on bills and on the development of the state budget for 2022-23.

The Legislature this year is considering both bills that were introduced last year and carried over to this year (known as two-year bills) as well as new legislation introduced this year. I’ll be sending you an update on some of the new bills we are working on later in February or early March as the deadline for new bills passes.

Two-year Bills

FCLCA advocates and activists are significantly involved in two “two-year bills” on criminal justice:

SB 300 - The Sentencing Reform Act of 2021. California law mandates a sentence of death or life without the possibility of parole for anyone convicted of “murder with special circumstances,” even if the person participated in the crime but did not kill anyone, nor intended for anyone to die. SB 300 will return to judges the discretion to dismiss a special circumstance allegation if the judge determines that a sentence of 25 years-to-life – that is, life with the possibility of parole – is more appropriate and better serves the interest of justice.

AB 256 (Kalra), The California Racial Justice for All Act. Makes AB 2542, signed last year by Gov. Newsom, retroactive. AB 2542 prohibits the state from seeking or obtaining a criminal conviction, or from imposing a sentence, based on race, ethnicity, or national origin.

Several FCLCA activists just recently met with legislators, including the office of the Senate pro tem, to advocate for these bills. They are now being taken up by the opposite house (by the Senate for an Assembly bill and by the Assembly for a Senate bill).

On the environmental side, SB 260, the Climate Corporate Accountability Act, is another bill from 2021 supported by FCLCA, which would create mandatory reporting of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions for large corporations that do business in California - it is now in the Assembly.

As there is constant change as the legislative process moves forward, be sure to visit our website, www.fclca.org, regularly to see news about these and other bills and actions you can take.
The 2022-23 State Budget

Again this year the budget will be a primary focus in the efforts to address the pandemic and its effects and to address economic inequities in California. Thanks to you, FCLCA takes an active role in budget advocacy as part of coalitions that work on health care, criminal justice reform, child poverty and work and family issues.

In January, Gov. Newsom submitted a proposed budget of $286.4 billion (with a revenue surplus estimated at $45 billion). Right now the Legislature is holding hearings to consider his proposal and formulate its own agenda for California’s spending plan.

There are a number of positive developments in the governor’s proposal that amplify issues FCLCA has been working on. Among them:

- A proposal to extend full-scope Medi-Cal benefits to income-eligible people ages 26-49 regardless of immigration status.
- Creating an Office of Health Care Affordability, which will address underlying cost drivers and improve the affordability of health coverage.
- Allowing households with $0 earnings to receive the California Young Child Tax Credit (rather than requiring earned income from work).
- Creating a refundable tax credit of $1,000 for former foster youth ages 18 – 25 who often struggle in the transition to adulthood.

For excellent information on the budget process and how it can be used to improve the lives of Californians, we recommend the California Budget and Policy Center’s article and other resources at their website calbudgetcenter.org. The FCL Education Fund is also preparing a summary of recent developments that will be posted soon on our website, www.fclca.org.

Addressing the impact of COVID-19

And lastly, some great news – as you may know, FCLCA has been an active advocate in an intensive campaign to restore up to two weeks of supplemental paid sick leave for those affected by COVID-19, including caring for a family member.

This benefit, which had previously been in effect but expired on Sept. 30, 2021, is critical for workers who should not have to make a choice between keeping their jobs and income or protecting their own health and the health of their families and the public.

The governor and legislature have agreed on a plan for extended sick leave that was heard this week in the Assembly and Senate Budget Committees. The plan has been passed by both houses and signed by the governor. It will then go into effect right away. Because of you, FCLCA was there to say – Yes, we support the workers of California!