

March 16, 2022

Senate President Pro Tempore Toni Atkins
State Capitol, Room 205
Sacramento, CA 95814

Senator Anthony Portantino
State Capitol, Room 5050
Sacramento, CA 9581

Re: California Faith Leader Support for the Racial Justice Act for All – AB 256 (Kalra)

Honorable Senators Atkins and Portantino,

We undersigned members of faith communities write in strong support of Assembly Bill 256 – the California Racial Justice Act for All – to extend the protections against discrimination in the courtroom based on race, ethnicity, or national origin to everyone, regardless of when that discrimination occurred. Racial bias has long permeated our institutions, and to address how this divides us we must allow everyone equal dignity and protection of the law.

California took a profound step forward in recognizing the effects of racism and bias on the courts with the Racial Justice Act. The Act empowers people to challenge racism when it appears in the courtroom; to advocate for justice without the stain of discrimination. However, our loved ones who encountered discrimination before this year are not protected by this law.

As faith leaders and activists rooted in several faith traditions, we all recognize and celebrate the fact that every single human was created in the image of God, and is worthy of God’s love and blessing. This obligates us to treat each person with dignity and justice. Racism is the most basic perversion of this fact of Creation. Systemic racism institutionalizes the appalling practice of discrimination, of dehumanizing fellow humans. This practice enables segregation, mass incarceration, slavery, and ultimately genocide. We must uproot racism in all its forms, specifically, and especially in the carceral system.

No one should be incarcerated because of racism. Last year, cries for racial justice called us all to recognize glaring inequities in the criminal legal system. We must heed those calls by examining our institutions and addressing how they reinforce hate and fear that would divide us. As the Hebrew prophet Amos exhorts, “let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an overflowing stream” (*Amos 5:24*).

We support the Racial Justice Act for All as legislation to help us confront racism in our system of justice. We urge the Legislature to pass the Assembly Bill 256 to Governor Newsom, and ask that he sign it.

Sincerely,

Senior Pastor Matthew Colwell

Rabbi Michelle Missaghieh

Knox Presbyterian Church
Pasadena

Temple Israel of Hollywood

Rabbi Laura Geller	Los Angeles Temple Emanuel Los Angeles
Sister Kathleen Bryant	Religious Sisters of Charity Culver City
Sister Joanna Carroll	Sisters of St. Joseph Los Angeles
Sister Diane Smith CSJ	Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet Porter Ranch
Rabbi Emeritus, Beth Shir Shalom Neil Comess-Daniels	Beth Shir Shalom Los Angeles
Permanent Deacon Chuck McDaniels	St. Rita Parish Sierra Madre
Missions Elder Joshua Ulises Marmol	Knox Presbyterian Church Pasadena
President Salam Al-Marayati	Muslim Public Affairs Council Los Angeles
Rabbi Ken Chasen	Leo Baeck Temple Los Angeles
Senior Minister Emeritus Rev. Jerald Stinson	First Congregational Church of Long Beach Long Beach
Pastor/Director Fr. Chris Ponnet	St Camillus Center for Spiritual Care/ Pax Christi Los Angeles Los Angeles
Rabbi Jim Kaufman	Temple Beth Hillel, North Hollywood, Valley Village
Rabbi Jim Kaufman	Temple Beth Hillel Valley Village
Executive Director Dr. Susan Stouffer	SOLA Community Peace Center Los Angeles
Executive Director Rev. Dr. Rick Schlosser	California Church IMPACT Sacramento
Co-Leader Malcolm Gissen	San Francisco Black & Jewish Unity Coalition San Francisco
Rabbi Micah Hyman	Temple Ner Shalom San Luis Obispo
Chair Stephen Rohde	Interfaith Communities United for Justice and Peace

Elder Joe Paul	City of Refuge Church - L.A. Gardena
CA Catholic Conference	California
Sister Marie Francis Schroepfer, CSJ	Sisters of St Joseph of Carondelet Bakersfield
Director Fred LaPuzza	Office of Restorative Justice, Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange Costa Mesa
Director, Office of Life, Justice & Charity Deacon Warren Hoy	Carmel Mission Carmel
Deacon Joseph DePage	Holy Cross Church Santa Cruz
Bishop Sylvester Ryan	San Carlos Cathedral Monterey
Deacon Charles Seagren	Aptos
Pastor Roy Margallo	St. John Church Felton
Deacon David Vargas	St. Rose of Lima Paso Robles
Deacon David Lansford	Sacred Heart Church Salinas
Pastor Fr. Kelly Vandehey	Old Mission San Luis Obispo San Luis Obispo
Deacon Jose Alcala	Our Lady of Solitude Parish Soledad Ca
Ms. Zinn	Temple Isaiah Lafayette
Rabbi Jay LeVine	Temple Isaiah Lafayette
Rabbi Judith Seid	Tri-Valley Cultural Jews, a CSJO affiliate Pleasanton
Rabbi Jennie Chabon	Congregation B'nai Tikvah Walnut Creek
Exec. Dir. Rev. Will McGarvey	Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County Pleasant Hill
Pastor Rev. Will McGarvey	East County Shared Ministry Pittsburg, CA
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Director, Lutheran Office of Public Policy California Regina Q. Banks	Sacramento Lutheran Office of Public Policy California Sacramento
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Rev. Debbie Weatherspoon	Easter Hill United Methodist Church Richmond
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Mitzvah Director, Congregation Kol Emeth Jeff Schwarz	Congregation Kol Emeth Palo Alto
Rev. Dr. Dale Weatherspoon	Easter Hill UMC Richmond
Pastor Daniel Gbundema	Campbell UMC Campbell , California Campbell
Rev. Emily Pickens-Jones	El Sobrante United Methodist Church El Sobrante
Rev. Caiti Hamilton	Open Door United Methodist Church Richmond
Clergy, Retired Rev. Donna DeCamp	Easter Hill UMC and Open Door UMC Point Richmond
Senior Pastor Reverend Dr. Debra Murray	FUMCPA Palo Alto
Mr. David A. Coolidge	Easter Hill UMC Richmond
Rabbi Laurie Hahn Tapper	Jewish Redwood City
Rabbi Netivot Shalom	Netivot Shalom Berkeley
Rabbi Amy Eilberg	Congregation Kol Emeth Los Altos
Rabbi Allan Berkowitz	San Jose
Rabbi Patricia Karlin-Neumann	Congregation Beth Am Los Altos
Rabbi Lavey Derby	Omek HaLev Millbrae
Rabbi Dr. Darren Kleinberg	Palo Alto

Rabbi Dev Noily	Kehilla Community Synagogue Oakland
Reverend Janet Gollery McKeithen	The Church in Ocean Park Santa Monica
Rabbi Sarah Weissman	Congregation Beth Am Los Altos Hills
Rabbi Suzanne Singer	Temple Beth El Riverside
Senior Minister Emeritus Rev. Jerald Stinson	First Congregational Church of Long Beach Long Beach
Rev. Doctor Glenda Hope	Calvary Presbyterian Church San Francisco
Pastor Floyd Thompkins	Saint Andrew Presbyterian Church Marin City
Rabbi Dara Frimmer	Los Angeles
Director of Community Engagement Leia Grossman	Temple Israel of Hollywood Los Angeles
Cantorial Soloist Rachelle Fox	Temple Israel of Hollywood Los Angeles
Executive Director Dr. Zachary Lasker	Temple Israel of Hollywood Los Angeles
Rabbi Chai Levy	Congregation Netivot Shalom Berkeley
Abolitionist Sanctuary, Executive Director Rev. Nikia Smith Robert, PhD	First AME Church, Pasadena Pasadena
Rabbi Sheldon Lewis	Kol Emeth Palo Alto
Reverend Nina Irene Kalmoutis	Unitarina Universalist Fellowship of Sunnyvale Sunnyvale
Rabbi David J. Cooper	Kehilla Community Synagogue Berkeley
Rabbi Aryeh Cohen	Shtibl Minyan Los Angeles
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Director of Life, Justice & Peace Greg Walgenbach	Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange Anaheim
Coordinator Laura Rios	Diocese of Sacramento

Office for Life and Justice Cristina Hernández	Sacramento Diocese of Oakland Oakland
Detention Chaplain Evelia Ortiz	Office of Restorative Justice Los Angeles
President/CEO Southern Christian Leadership Conference Southern California Pastor William D. Smart Jr.	Christ Liberation Ministries Los Angeles
Director, Office of Restorative Justice Fred LaPuzza	Catholic Diocese of Orange Garden Grove
Director, Office of Restorative Justice Marciano Avilla	Diocese of San Bernardino San Bernardino
Associate Director of Restorative Justice Leland Campbell	St. Frances Cabrini San Jose
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Deacon/Director of Catholic Restorative Justice Office John P. Storm	Diocese of Santa Rosa Santa Rosa
Deacon Fermin Gomez	Office of Restorative Justice Sylmar
Director, Office of Advocacy Abraham A. Joven	Diocese of San Bernardino San Bernardino
Director, Office of Life, Justice & Charity Deacon Warren Hoy	Diocese of Monterey Monterey
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Sen. Chaplain Twin Towers Corr. Facility Arturo Alvarez	Holy Family Church, Wilmington Long Beach
Reverend Margaret Hudley McCauley	St. John's Episcopal Cathedral Los Angeles
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Board Secretary Nailah Elamin	Masjid As-Sabur Sacramento
Imam Julius Thibodeaux Jr.	Masjid AsSabur Sacramento
Pamela Dwyer	Masjid as Sabur Sacramento
Senior Minister/ Spiritual Director Rev. Kevin Kitrell Ross	Unity of Sacramento International Spiritual Center Sacramento

Ms. Kimberly Osborn	Masjid As-Sabur Elk Grove
Member William Abdullah	Masjid As Sabur Sacramento
Director of Organizing Teresa Flores	Parkside Community Church Sacramento
Imam Omar Shareef	Masjid As Sabur West Sacramento
Citizen Barbara Araya	Masjid Sabur Sacramento
Business Owner Sameerah Chandler	Sabar West Sacramento
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Regional Executive Director George Cummings	Imani Community Church Oakland
Rev. Michael Dack	Parkside Community Church Sacramento
Parishioner Meg Bowerman	St. Columba Catholic Church Oakland
Ms. Elizabeth Mariscal	St. Augustine Church Culver City
Antiracism and Justice Ministries Committee Member Douglas Leich	Danville Congregational Church, UCC Danville
Rev. Kristi Denham	Peninsula Multifaith Coalition San Mateo
Interim Executive Director Rev. Jennifer Gutierrez	Clergy & Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE) Los Angeles / Orange County