

Senate Bill 1157

Strengthening Family Connections: In-Person Visitation

Senator Holly J. Mitchell
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THIS BILL

SB 1157 would preserve meaningful visitation rights for people in local correctional and detention facilities, juvenile halls, juvenile homes, ranches, and camps by clarifying that their right to a minimum amount of visitation refers to in-person visits, which cannot be replaced with video visits.

This bill will help strengthen family connections by ensuring access to in-person visits between incarcerated and detained persons and their loved ones. Providing access to visits improves behavior inside institutions, reduces recidivism, and reduces negative impacts on loved ones, especially of incarcerated people.

BACKGROUND

When a person is incarcerated, even for a short period of time, family contact and in-person visits are crucial to maintaining family stability, reducing disciplinary infractions and violence while incarcerated, reducing recidivism, increasing the chances of obtaining employment post-release, and facilitating successful re-entry.¹

Since the implementation of public safety realignment, more people are serving time in county jails and for longer periods of time than ever before². Eliminating in-person visitation would have a drastic and negative impact on families, particularly children, the wellbeing of incarcerated people, and the institutional environment.

¹ U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections (2015). *Video Visiting in Corrections: Benefits, Limitations and Implementation Considerations*. Washington D.C. P. 3. Retrieved from

<https://s3.amazonaws.com/static.nicic.gov/Library/029609.pdf>.

² Lofstrum, M., & Martin, B. (2015). *California's County Jails*.

Retrieved from

http://www.ppic.org/main/publication_show.asp?i=1061

At least six California counties (Kings, Napa, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Mateo, and Solano) have eliminated in-person visitation in at least one of their jails, meaning families there can only see their loved ones through a computer screen.

Two counties (Imperial and Placer) have severely restricted in-person visitation since adopting video visits.

Three additional counties (Orange, Tulare, and Ventura) intend to renovate or build new facilities that have no space for in-person visits. Families with loved ones in these facilities will only be able to see their loved ones through a computer screen. At least seven California counties (Butte, Glenn, Los Angeles, Mendocino, Plumas, Riverside and San Luis Obispo) use video visits in at least one of their jails and at least seven other counties (Alameda, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, Sutter, and Yolo) plan to adopt a video visitation system.

ISSUE

74% of county jails across the country that implemented video visitation eliminated in-person visitation³. Families with members in these institutions must pay for video calls from home or can video call their incarcerated family member from the jail lobby for free. In the latter situation, both the visitor and the incarcerated person are often in the same building, but instead of having a real visit, they can only see each other through a video screen.

Even when family members travel to these jails to "visit" their loved ones through a video screen, equipment often malfunctions, leaving them unable to see their loved ones at all.

³ Rabuy, B., & Wagner, P. (2015). *Screening Out Family Time: The for-profit video visitation industry in prisons and jails*. Easthampton: Prison Policy Institute. Retrieved from <http://www.prisonpolicy.org/visitation/report.html>

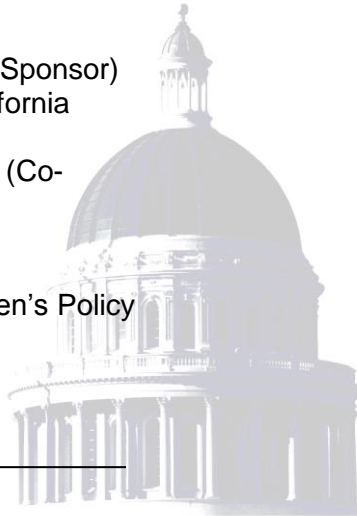
SOLUTION

Existing law specifies that the Board of State and Community Corrections create minimum standards for local correctional facilities, juvenile halls, juvenile homes, ranches, and camps. This bill would clarify that the minimum standards related to visitation refer to in-person visitation. This bill would also require that private detention facilities meet the same minimum standards.

This bill would also require that new and current construction, including renovations, of local correctional facilities, juvenile halls, juvenile homes, ranches, and camps and private detention facilities provide or maintain space for in-person visitation.

SUPPORT

CIVIC (Co-Sponsor)
Ella Baker Center for Human Rights (Co-Sponsor)
Friends Committee on Legislation of California
(Sponsor)
Legal Service for Prisoners with Children (Co-Sponsor)
Prison Law Office (Co-Sponsor)
Project WHAT! (Co-Sponsor)
Women's Foundation of California, Women's Policy
Institute (Co-Sponsor)



OPPOSITION

None on file

STATUS OF BILL

Introduced

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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