



June 30, 2021

VIA Online Portal to Author and Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Ash Kalra
California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 2196
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 256 (Kalra), the California Racial Justice Act for All – Criminal procedure: discrimination – CO-SPONSOR SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Kalra:

The League of Women Voters of California, a co-sponsor of AB 256, the California Racial Justice Act for All, writes in strong support of the bill, which will provide a mechanism for relief for those whose convictions or sentences were based on race, ethnicity, or national origin. This bill will extend the essential protections of the California Racial Justice Act (AB 2542, 2020) to all Californians.

With the Racial Justice Act of 2020, California took a profound step forward to address institutionalized and implicit racial bias in our criminal courts. The legislation empowers defendants to object to charges, convictions, or punishment if they can show that anyone involved in their case — a judge, attorney, officer, expert witness, or juror — demonstrated bias during the process, or if they can show statistical evidence of demographic inequities in charges, convictions, or sentences for the same crime. However, the 2020 legislation was prospective; it excluded those who had been harmed prior to January 1, 2021 by racial bias and discrimination that has long permeated our criminal legal system.

If prohibiting racism in our courts and providing a person a means to remedy racial bias in their case is the right thing to do, it is the right thing to do for everyone. Those with prior, racially biased convictions and sentences deserve

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equal justice under the law and have waited long enough. Additionally, providing a mechanism for retroactive relief will allow the state to realize significant court and correctional savings.

The League of Women Voters of California is co-sponsoring AB 256, the California Racial Justice Act for All, to make the Racial Justice Act retroactive and ensure that everyone is afforded an opportunity to pursue justice. We thank you for authoring this important legislation and strongly urge its passage.

Sincerely,



Carol Moon Goldberg
President