



Armenian National Committee of America - Western Region

ANCA-WR Expresses Support for AB 3228 - Accountability in Detention Act

The Armenian National Committee of America - Western Region expresses its support for AB 3228 (Bonta), a bill which would ensure accountability, transparency, and human rights in civil detention facilities in California.

The state of California is home to a vibrant immigrant community, of which the Armenian community constitutes an important component. The contributions of Armenians of all walks of life to California's diverse and multicultural society is a testament to the importance of immigration in the exchange of ideas, the promotion of economic growth and prosperity, and the political maturity of our state. It also stands as a proud testament to the humanitarian spirit of the United States and the State of California in providing sanctuary to those - including the Armenian people - who have come seeking refuge and reprieve from suffering.

Though California is home to more immigrants than any other state - our state is also home to one of the largest immigration detention systems in the country. Given the COVID-19 pandemic, we are gravely concerned by the risk of contamination in these facilities, particularly given the fact that one such facility - the Otay Mesa Facility in San Diego - currently has one of the highest confirmed COVID-19 cases in the nation.

Tens of thousands of detainees pass through these facilities each year, and are often cycled through multiple facilities before their release - risking mass exposure in an environment where the close proximity of individuals limits the ability to practice social distancing, and where medical resources available in these facilities are inadequate to deal with a significant outbreak.

Almost all of these detention facilities are owned and operated by private for-profit corporations, lacking basic transparency, accountability and minimum humanitarian standards. Although these facilities are run pursuant to federal contracts, California has the legal right and in fact the responsibility to ensure minimum human rights standards.

The ANCA-WR supports AB 3228 on moral and humanitarian grounds, in addition to the fact that concerns raised in the bill surrounding minimum humanitarian standards are concerns shared by many members of our community - especially recent migrants and their family members. On this front, we are aware of at least one [Armenian](#) held in one such facility.

Four of the five immigration detention facilities in California are currently operated by private actors. Both the federal agency and private contractors have agreed upon specific standards within their contracts, and any deviation from those standards, particularly those that result in negligence or harm, should create clear liability on behalf of the operator. The federal agency has proven reluctant to terminate contracts with operators who routinely violate the standards set forth in their contracts, or to provide meaningful levels of oversight or enforcement. As such, AB 3228 provides a mechanism through which violations of specific standards can lead to legal action, and provide meaningful recourse and consequences for these operators.

For the reasons stated above, the Armenian National Committee of America - Western Region supports AB 3228 and would welcome its passage into law as a means of holding the operators of detention facilities accountable to the standards agreed to in their contracts as well as to guarantee the health and safety of everyone in the State of California, including those most vulnerable members of society - many of whom our organization represents.

Armenian National Committee of America - Western Region Board of Directors