



CWDA
Advancing Human Services
for the Welfare of All Californians

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February 28, 2020

The Honorable Eloise Gómez Reyes
Chair, Assembly Human Services Committee
State Capitol, Room 2175
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Assembly Member Reyes:

**RE: AB 1929 (RUBIO) AS INTRODUCED
JANUARY 15, 2020 – CO-SPONSOR**

The County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA) is pleased to be a CO-SPONSOR of AB 1929 by Assembly Member Rubio. This bill would indefinitely extend the Internet-based child abuse and neglect reporting systems established by SB 478 (Chapter 490, Statutes of 2015) and expand these systems' use to all mandated reporters.

Currently, in nearly all counties, mandated reporters can only report child abuse by telephone hotline. While telephone reporting allows for a direct channel of communication between the reporter and the relevant authorities, emergency response staff in more populous counties of California struggle to keep pace with the number and length of calls they receive. In Los Angeles County, the call volume to the Child Protection Hotline rose by 23.6 percent in 10 years, reaching 225,937 calls in 2018. Per the county, each call requires 20-30 minutes on average, plus an additional hour to an hour and a half to generate a referral. As a result, this increase in call volume represents a significant challenge to ensuring child safety, the paramount goal of our child welfare system.

Los Angeles is meeting this challenge in part by operating the Child Abuse Reporting Electronic System (CARES). Implemented as a pilot program in 2017 as authorized by SB 478, CARES enables certain mandated reporters to submit online reports of suspected incidents of abuse and neglect when the victim is not in immediate danger of further abuse. The process of submitting a report through CARES includes qualifying questions designed to exclude the online submission of more urgent cases when the victim is in immediate danger, ensuring that such cases are still reported by phone.

The Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) has found that allowing mandated reporters to make non-urgent child abuse reports through the online portal, rather than expend valuable time on hold to make a verbal report, has led to a tremendous improvement in efficiency for both mandated reporters and the child welfare agency, and increased the county's ability to respond as quickly as possible to the most urgent cases.

If the authorization in current law is not extended, Los Angeles County risks losing the benefits of CARES when the authority for continuing online reporting pilot programs expires at the beginning of 2021. Further, all counties would lose the opportunity to use similar systems in the future. AB 1929 will ensure that this vital authority is indefinitely maintained, both for Los Angeles County and for any counties that choose to implement online reporting under the same requirements. Additionally, this bill will expand the scope of those allowed to make online reports to include all categories of mandated reporters, not just those specified in SB 478, thereby expanding the overall impact of online reporting.

For these reasons CWDA is pleased to CO-SPONSOR AB 1929, along with the County of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.

Sincerely,



Cathy Senderling-McDonald | Deputy Executive Director

cc: The Honorable Blanca Rubio
Honorable Members, Assembly Human Services Committee
Kelsy Castillo, Consultant, Assembly Human Services Committee
Cyndi Hillery, Assembly Republican Consultant
Tam Ma, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom
Robert Smith, California Department of Social Services
Justin Garrett, California State Association of Counties
County Caucus