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Bipartisan Legislation Centered on Protecting Incarcerated Survivors Passes California Legislature

SB 337 (Menjivar) and AB 464 (Aguiar-Curry) headed to the Governor's desk

SACRAMENTO, CA — Today, two California bills—AB 464 and SB 337—fueled by the voices of incarcerated survivors and a coalition of justice advocates are headed to the Governor's desk after overwhelmingly passing the California Legislature, setting a precedent for the state to protect survivors incarcerated in women's-designated prisons from sexual abuse. Justice advocates and legislators, Assembly Majority Leader Cecilia Aguiar-Curry and Senator Caroline Menjivar, have worked in solidarity with incarcerated survivors to seek accountability and justice with this legislation.

SB 337 and AB 464 are the result of extensive work from advocacy organizations and the Sexual Abuse Response and Prevention Working Group, who listened to hundreds of people inside state prisons to reduce the occurrence of sexual violence by state employees in California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) facilities, including healthcare settings.

AB 464, authored by **Assembly Majority Leader Aguiar-Curry** (D-Winters), passed both chambers of the California Legislature with unanimous bipartisan support. The bill will strengthen legal protections and accountability for incarcerated survivors of sexual abuse. AB 464 increases monitoring to protect survivors from retaliation, prohibits rehiring of staff confirmed to have committed sexual abuse, mandates access to community support for survivors, and creates meaningful change by tolling the statute of limitations during the person's incarceration.

"Sexual abuse in our state prisons is unacceptable. AB 464 is about holding people accountable and protecting our survivors from retaliation," said **Assembly Majority Leader Cecilia Aguiar-Curry** (D-Winters), the bill author. "I'm grateful the Legislature moved this bill forward, and I hope the Governor signs it. Our survivors deserve to be heard and protected."

SB 337, authored by **Senator Caroline Menjivar** (D-San Fernando Valley), likewise passed the Assembly with overwhelming support, 60-0. SB 337 will help protect the health, safety, and civil

rights of incarcerated people, providing much-needed protections for people incarcerated in CDCR facilities. The bill mandates zero-tolerance policies for staff, clarity on when body-worn cameras can be deactivated, documentation during non-routine body searches, and other critical provisions.

“Time and again, the abuse and misconduct experienced by incarcerated women from the very people placed to care for them reflect the institutional failures within CDCR facilities. Without systemic, meaningful reform, California cannot expect women to rehabilitate in the same walls where their safety and dignity are not protected,” said **Senator Caroline Menjivar** (D–San Fernando Valley). “SB 337 strengthens safeguards and holds California’s correctional system to the standard we expect them to meet. I am proud to work with advocates, my colleagues, and the bill sponsors to see SB 337 pass with bipartisan support to ensure there is accountability and transparency in our prisons to prevent sexual assaults.”

Elizabeth "Leesa" Nomura, Membership Organizer with California Coalition for Women Prisoners (CCWP), said, “For years, survivors have reported what was happening and were met with silence and retaliation. I know how it feels to speak up and not be believed. AB 464 and SB 337 tells the officers who committed this harm that people are watching, while giving the next survivor a chance to have their voice heard and their reports taken seriously. CCWP, inside and outside the walls, hopes Governor Newsom signs these protections into law. We are all watching and waiting. These bills will not give back what was taken from us; for many survivors, the only true relief is release from custody. But this is one step toward accountability, and we are asking Governor Newsom to take it.”

Elizabeth Lozano, Ambassador for Sister Warriors Freedom Coalition, said, “Every institution must be held accountable when it fails to protect those in its care, and every survivor must have the opportunity to seek justice through a lawsuit whenever they feel safe to come forward – especially given the very real threat of retaliation for those who are still incarcerated and under the direct watch of their abuser.”

A recent [US Department of Justice report](#) confirmed what incarcerated survivors have shared for years: CDCR fails to protect them from staff sexual misconduct and retaliation. **Lozano**, a survivor and advocate, attested to this tragic reality in a [CalMatters article](#), saying: “The reality is, in prison, survivors face a cycle of violence and abuse from prison staff. While we can technically file a grievance and we hope for accountability, it rarely results in safety or protection for us.”

Simelia Rogers, Policy Associate with the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, said, “The bipartisan passage of both AB 464 and SB 337 affirms something we’ve known for a long time—survivors exist within carceral systems, and their positionality as being incarcerated does not absolve them of their right to human rights and their access to justice. It is long overdue that the state take action to protect survivors in its custody.”

David S. Lee, Deputy Director of ValorUS®, said, “Survivors of sexual assault while incarcerated should be able to report harm and heal on their own terms without fearing retaliation by prison staff. AB 464 helps make that happen, and unanimous votes from both legislative houses show that California agrees.”

Cristine Soto DeBerry, Executive Director of Prosecutor’s Alliance Action, said, “The more power the government exercises over a person, the stronger the guardrails on that power must be – and nowhere is that principle more important than behind prison walls. That’s why we’re so proud to have co-sponsored AB 464 to ensure that incarcerated survivors who report abuse do not face retaliation, punishment, or further harm for coming forward. We are grateful to the Legislature for sending this bill to Governor Newsom, and we urge him to sign it into law and make these protections a reality.”

The Governor has until September 30th to sign AB 464 and SB 337 into law.

SB 337 (Menjivar) is co-sponsored by Sister Warriors Freedom Coalition, California Coalition for Women’s Prisoners, and the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights.

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