

# Reginald Byron Jones-Sawyer, Sr.

## 57<sup>th</sup> Assembly District



### AB 617 – REP for All Immigrants Act

#### SUMMARY

The Representation, Equity, and Protections (REP) for All Immigrants Act seeks to update the statutory language of the One California (One CA) program by expanding the scope of immigration services, broadening the criteria for eligible service providers, and eliminating racist exclusions for immigrants with previous contact with the criminal legal system.

#### BACKGROUND

The One California program was established through the 2015 Budget Act and became the first state-based program in the U.S. to dedicate public investments for indigent immigrants in California. Because of its success and impact, the program has grown from a one-time \$15 million investment into an annual investment of \$45 million. The California Department of Social Services administers the program and issues grants to nonprofit organizations providing services to indigent immigrants in California.

One CA grantee organizations rely on program funds to provide critical education, outreach, and legal services, including removal defense, naturalization, and affirmative relief. Removal defense involves representation for immigrants facing deportation. Affirmative relief services include assisting with applications for DACA, asylum, and other immigration remedies.

Every year, One California grantee organizations provide education and outreach to 200,000 immigrant Californians, legal and application assistance to tens of thousands of immigrant Californians, and representation for over a thousand Californians facing detention, deportation, and family separation.

Since its inception, the One CA program has provided crucial access to legal services and representation for California's immigrant population. However, the program has failed to match California's commitment to racial equity – the program's prohibition on services based on an individual's previous contact with the criminal legal system perpetuates racial injustices that the state has taken steps to address.

Moreover, CDSS has narrowly defined the types of services that constitute immigration relief under the One CA program. Given the broad demand for holistic services to address the needs of California's immigrant population, statutory changes are necessary to ensure service providers can more adequately serve California's immigrant communities.

A more efficient and updated program will enable immigrant communities to better access the benefits of the valuable One CA program. The exclusion of an entire population within the immigrant community from the program is at odds with California's work towards racial justice and criminal system reforms.

#### THIS BILL

AB 617 updates the One CA program by:

- Removing outdated exclusions to provide One CA program access for all immigrant Californians – regardless of past contact with the criminal legal system;
- Broadening eligibility for qualified nonprofit organizations who can apply for funding and provide services.
- Clarifying and expanding the definition of immigration services to include social services, interpretation, and litigation costs.
- Revising data collection and reporting requirements; and
- Creating an advisory committee to provide recommendations.

#### SUPPORT

Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Southern California (Co-Sponsor)  
California Immigrant Policy Center (Co-Sponsor)  
Central American Resource Center (Co-Sponsor)  
Immigrant Legal Resource Center (Co-Sponsor)  
Vera Institute of Justice (Co-Sponsor)

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