



July 24, 2022

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
1303 10th Street, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Urge you to Support Vision Act (AB 937)

Dear Governor Gavin Newsom,

We are bishops, faith leaders, indigenous leaders, ministers, rabbis, imams, and people of faith from across California. We are deeply concerned that non-citizen immigrants who have worked hard and earned parole or release from CDCR or jails continue to be transferred into Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention facilities in California and out-of-state to face deportation. This practice of transferring people in state custody to ICE contradicts California's values of honoring rehabilitation, transformation, and family unity. Together, we have a powerful opportunity to change this injustice.

Recently, you received a letter from 140 Californians who were transferred into ICE custody after earning release from CDCR and local jails, or family of those transferred. Some of those who signed are still in ICE detention, others have been deported and are living in exile, others have had a conviction overturned and still face deportation, and others have been lucky to be released back into community outside detention. They are people who have served time in jail or state prison like Sales Prasad, an Indo-Fijian artist, brother, and nephew, who after being found eligible for release from prison from his demonstrated transformation, was directly transferred to ICE detention and is at risk of deportation to Fiji. They are people who received a commutation from your office, or completed their sentence. Their letter testifies to each one's story and journey of transformation, the trauma they and their families have endured, and the lost years of their lives spent needlessly detained when they should have an opportunity to return home to their families.

Though we are people from multiple faith traditions, we share a set of common beliefs that we, as humans, are capable of error, but also of redemption, forgiveness and transformation. We know that with honesty, hard work, recognizing root causes and proper support, people are capable of change. It is unfair to transfer, deport and exile a person with a conviction for an offense committed decades or years ago, for which the person has served time and earned release. We believe that past convictions do not and should not define who a person is forever. If they had their citizenship, they would have come home.

Transferring people to ICE to be caged for immigration enforcement purposes also is excessive and unnecessary as there are a variety of alternatives to ensure that people appear in immigration court. Immigrants can safely proceed through their immigration cases without having to be detained and separated from their employment, families and communities are better able to access immigration counsel and prepare for any deportation proceedings that may be initiated against them.

Many of these individuals had green cards and are facing detention and potential deportation due to receiving a state criminal conviction resulting in the loss of their immigration status under a punitive [1996 federal law](#). With the recent criminal justice reforms in California that provide avenues for obtaining post-conviction relief, they may be able to vacate or reduce their sentence and thereby win their immigration case.

We write to respectfully urge you to champion the VISION Act (AB 937) and sign the bill when it reaches your desk. We also encourage you to meet with the signatories of the recent letter.

We pray that you act urgently, grounded in your moral conscience and political courage.

California has an ethical and moral obligation to exercise bold and responsive leadership and take action to protect the rights of immigrants and stop the unnecessary and voluntary practice of transferring immigrants to ICE, and shut-off the pipeline to immigration detention.

Sincerely,