



CALIFORNIA COALITION FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

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August 21, 2007

Assembly Member Leno
Chair of Assembly Appropriations
State Capitol, Room 2114
Sacramento, CA 95814

Via Facsimile: 916-319-2181

RE: Support for Senate Bill 756 (Ridley-Thomas)

Dear Assemblymember Leno:

The California Coalition for Civil Rights (CACCR) would like to express our support for SB 756 (Ridley-Thomas). CACCR is a statewide alliance of civil rights organizations, activists, educators, lawyers, and advocates who are dedicated to achieving a just and healthy society, with several member organizations working directly on criminal justice issues. SB 756 requires the Attorney General to convene interested parties in the criminal justice system in order to develop guidelines for the collection and handling of eyewitness identification evidence – an important measure in ensuring that law enforcement can effectively fulfill its mission to prosecute the guilty and protect the innocent.

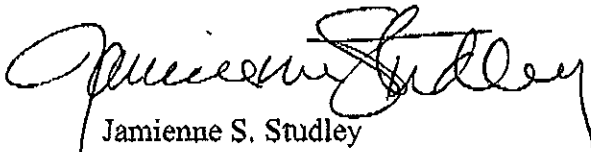
The most frequently identified cause of wrongful conviction is the misidentification of the criminal perpetrator by eyewitnesses. Three injustices result from such misidentifications. First, misidentification can cause an innocent person to be incarcerated. Second, when an innocent person is incarcerated, criminal investigations end and the real perpetrator remains free to commit similar, or potentially worse, crimes. Third, victims' families are subjected to double the trauma, with the loss or injury of a loved one, and the guilt over conviction of an innocent. We can avoid these miscarriages of justice by improving the practices surrounding eyewitness identifications, which will help to prevent the conviction of innocent individuals and allow law enforcement to remain focused on pursuit of actual criminals.

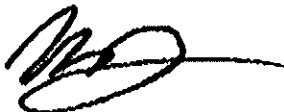
The eyewitness identification guidelines developed by the Attorney General will help to ensure reliable and accurate suspect identifications, and will be consistent with the reliable evidence supporting best practices, including consideration of the recommendations of the California Commission on the Fair Administration of Justice. Once the guidelines have been developed, the Attorney General will report to the Legislature, describing the *voluntary* implementation of the guidelines and the training implemented by California law enforcement agencies.

SB 756 is intended to improve the accuracy of eyewitness identifications, increase public trust in the criminal justice system, and implement the policies and procedures recommended by the California Commission on the Fair Administration of Justice, which have proven effective in other jurisdictions. CACCR strongly supports the legislative reforms recommended by the

California Commission on the Fair Administration of Justice and urges timely passage of SB 756.

Sincerely,


Jamiene S. Studley
Co-Chair


Malcolm Yeung
Co-Chair

cc:

Senator Mark Ridley-Thomas via fax: (916) 445-8899

California Commission on the Fair Administration of Justice via fax: (408) 554-5026

Coalition Members Include:

- AIDS Legal Referral Panel
- American Civil Liberties Union
Northern California
- Asian Law Caucus
- Bay Area Immigrant Rights Coalition
- California Association of Human
Relations Organizations
- California Immigrant Policy Center
- California Women's Agenda
- Centro Legal De La Raza
- Charles Houston Bar Association
- Coalition for Economic Equity
- Community United Against Violence
- Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund
- Equal Justice Society
- Ella Baker Center for Human Rights
- Housing Rights, Inc.
- San Francisco Human Rights Commission
Impact Fund
- La Raza Centro Legal
- Law Center for Families
- Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights
of the San Francisco Bay Area
- Legal Services for Prisoners with Children
- NARAL-Pro Choice California
- National Center for Youth Law
- National Health Law Program
- National Latina/o Law Student Association
- National Lawyers Guild
San Francisco Bay Area Chapter
- Online Policy Group
- Public Advocates
- Rainbow-PUSH
- San Francisco Black Firefighters Inc.