

# Peace and Freedom Party of California

## Legislative Committee

Hon. Holly Mitchell  
State Capitol, Room 5080  
Hon. Ricardo Lara  
State Capitol, Room 5050  
Sacramento, CA 95814

***Re: SB 180 (Mitchell and Lara)***  
***Repeal Ineffective Sentencing Enhancements Act (The RISE Act) - Support***

Dear Senators Mitchell and Lara:

On behalf of Peace and Freedom Party of California, I write in strong support of SB 180, the Repeal Ineffective Sentencing Enhancements Act (The RISE Act). SB 180 would repeal the three-year sentence enhancement for prior drug convictions, with an exception for convictions involving the use of a minor. This extreme punishment has failed to protect communities or reduce the availability of drugs, but has instead resulted in overcrowded jails and prisons, harsh sentences, and crippled state and local budgets. By repealing this expensive and ineffective punishment, funds will be freed to reinvest in community programs that actually improve the quality of life and reduce crime.

Peace and Freedom Party has a long history, 50 years, of advocating for the removal of armed forces and police from around the world and our local communities, and for people to make those decisions that affect their own lives. Our platform calls for the decriminalization of victimless activities, including drug use. Enforcement of these personal acts of freedom is primarily directed against poor and working class people.

The RISE Act would begin to undo some of the damage done because of the failed War on Drugs. The long sentences that were central to the drug war strategy utterly failed to reduce drug availability or the number of people harmed in the illicit drug market. Controlled substances are now cheaper and more widely available than ever before, despite a massive investment of tax revenue and human lives in an unprecedented build-up and fill-up of prisons and jails that have devastated low-income communities, particularly neighborhoods and barrios of people of color.

The RISE Act is urgently needed. Counties around the state are building new jails to imprison more people with long sentences, funneling money away from community-based programs and services.

Since 2007, California has spent \$2.5 billion on county jail construction – not including the costs borne by the counties for construction and increased staffing, or the state’s debt service for these high-interest loans. Sheriffs have argued for this expansion by pointing to their growing jail populations, particularly people with long sentences and with mental health and substance use needs. By reforming sentence enhancements for people with prior drug convictions, SB 180 will address the rationale for costly jail expansion, allowing state and county funds to be invested in programs and services that meet community needs and improve public safety, including community-based mental health and substance use treatment, job programs, and affordable housing.

The RISE Act will reduce racial disparities in the criminal justice system. Although rates of drug use and selling are comparable across racial lines, people of color are far more likely to be stopped, searched, arrested, prosecuted, convicted and incarcerated for drug law violations than are whites.

Further, sentence enhancements based on prior convictions target the poorest and most marginalized people in our communities — those with substance use and mental health needs, and those who, after prior contact with police or imprisonment, have struggled to reintegrate into society.

For these reasons, among others, Peace and Freedom Party strongly supports SB 180 (Mitchell and Lara), an urgently needed reform and urge members to vote aye.

Respectfully,

C T Weber  
Peace and Freedom Party of California  
Legislative Committee Chairperson

Cc:

Assembly Public Safety Committee:  
Reginald Jones-Sawyer, Jr. (Chair)  
Tom Lackey (Vice Chair)  
Heath Flora  
Lorena Gonzalez Fletcher  
Bill Quirk  
Blanca Rubio  
Miguel Santiago  
Gregory Pagan (Chief Counsel)

Ella Baker Center for Human Rights  
Emily Harris