



California Church IMPACT

4044 Pasadena Avenue
Sacramento, CA 95821
916) 488-7300
(916-488-7310 – FAX
www.churchimpact.org

Rev. Dr. Rick Schlosser,
Executive Director

Elizabeth Sholes
Director of Public Policy

Rev. Gail Benson
So/CA Health Care Director

African Methodist Episcopal
African Methodist Episcopal Zion
American Baptist
Armenian Church of the West
Christian Methodist Episcopal
Church of the Brethren
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Community of Christ
The Episcopal Church
Ethiopian Orthodox Church
Evangelical Lutheran Church in
America
Greek Orthodox
Independent Catholic Churches
International
Metropolitan Community Church
Moravian Church in America
National Baptist Convention
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Reformed Church in America
Swedenborgian Church
United Church of Christ
United Methodist Church
Church Women United
Orthodox Clergy Council

April 9, 2009

Hon. Nancy Skinner
California State Assembly
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 999-SUPPORT

Dear Assembly Member Skinner:

California Church IMPACT represents 1.5 million members of the mainstream, progressive Protestant communities of faith. Part of our mission is support for restorative justice that not only aids and comforts victims but restores the offenders to society, especially within our juvenile corrections system.

Two decades ago, *Boston Globe* columnist Ellen Goodman asked why do the rich need incentives but the poor need desperation? The same question must be asked for how we treat youthful offenders. Our current system uses the entirely punitive system of 'time adds' for in-custody infractions that delay a youth's appearance before the parole board. This adds to the length and cost of the sentence and virtually guarantees that a juvenile with an already horrid self regard and view of larger society will emerge finally an even more angry and vengeful person.

AB 999 changes that punishment-only approach to a system of incentives through educational achievement and participation in various programs. Helping juvenile offenders to find real achievement by virtue of their own actions is a major step toward their successful engagement with society upon release. Success is no longer elusive' society is no longer the enemy. All humans need some measure of authority over their own lives and actions, but they cannot learn that within a structure of abuse and punitive action. As a state, we cannot afford the \$234,000 per year that it costs to warehouse and abuse our

AB 999-California Church IMPACT

p.2

youth. As a society, we cannot afford to abandon these juveniles so that they become still more detritus costing themselves a future and us a healthy community of self-reliant people.

We thank you for finding a means to save these youths and simultaneously save our state the ridiculous cost of their imprisonment. This bill is a major step toward restorative justice, and we strongly support its passage.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Sholes
Director of Public Policy