ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 2114

Introduced by Assembly Member Eduardo Garcia

February 17, 2016

An act relating to prisoners.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2114, as introduced, Eduardo Garcia. Prisoners: support services. Existing law requires the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to contract with a private nonprofit agency or agencies to establish and operate a visitor center outside each state adult prison in California which has a population of more than 300 inmates. Under existing law, those visitor centers are required to provide minimum services to prison visitors, including, among other services, assistance with transportation between public transit terminals and prisons, child care for visitors’ children, and referral to other agencies and services.

This bill would state the intent of the Legislature to enact legislation that supports and creates culturally competent programs that increase opportunities for family friendly contact during and after imprisonment, that funds and creates culturally competent programmatic support services and reentry strategies outside of imprisonment that support fatherhood involvement, family reunification, and family strengthening, and that supports expanded funding for innovation on culturally relevant parenting, fatherhood support, and young male mentorship. The bill would make related legislative findings and declarations.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. (a) The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

1. Studies have consistently found that prisoners who maintain close contact with their family members while incarcerated have better postrelease outcomes and lower recidivism rates. Despite this, corrections officials are often obstinate in supporting this communication with respect to written correspondence, visitation, and phone calls.

2. Revising visitation policies to facilitate visits by family members, investing in prison-based literacy programs and less restrictive mail policies, and reducing intrastate prison and jail phone rates would provide prisoners with greater opportunities to maintain close relationships with their families.

3. Research cites that positive fatherhood involvement improves a child’s life trajectory. Also, fatherhood involvement in a child’s life protects against risk factors that pose harm to children, such as problematic behavior, maternal depression, and family economic hardship. Fatherhood involvement is also associated with promoting children’s social and language skills.

4. Specific examples of culturally relevant approaches to parenting, fatherhood support, and young male mentorship include CarayCorazon, El Joven Noble, and Circulo de Hombres, which have been chosen as the culturally based family strengthening interventions in other initiatives.

(b) It is the intent of the Legislature to enact legislation that accomplishes all of the following:

1. Supports and creates culturally competent programs that increase opportunities for family friendly contact during and after imprisonment.

2. Funds and creates culturally competent programmatic support services and reentry strategies outside of imprisonment that support fatherhood involvement, family reunification, and family strengthening.

3. Supports expanded funding for innovation on culturally relevant parenting, fatherhood support, and young male mentorship to decrease the risk of violence, suicide, and other traumas that children of prisoners who are under 17 years of age may be exposed to by providing education, skills-based training, and early
intervention and treatment referrals to parents, families, and children.