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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

California Introduces Forced Sterilization Compensation Bill Covering Eugenic Era & Prison Sterilizations

Sacramento, California (April 23, 2019) --- The Assembly Public Safety Committee passed AB 1764 – the Forced Sterilization Compensation Program Bill, authored by Assemblymember Wendy Carrillo. AB 1764 would provide victim compensation to survivors of California state-sponsored sterilization between 1909 and 1979; and survivors of involuntary sterilizations in women’s state prisons after 1979.

The bill, which is co-sponsored by California Latinas for Reproductive Justice (CLRJ), the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF), and the California Coalition for Women Prisoners (CCWP) would make California the third state in the nation to provide compensation for survivors who were sterilized under state eugenics laws and the first to offer compensation to survivors of involuntary sterilizations at women’s state prisons.

The number of people sterilized under the 1909 eugenics law in California account for one third of all the recorded sterilizations that occurred in the United States in the 20th century. All those affected lived in state institutions and were classified as having disabilities or were deemed “unfit for reproduction” by state entities. It is important to note that administrators of the law at the time had broad discretion in practice to decide who was classified as “unfit.” The majority of sterilizations were done on women and girls, and disproportionately impacted Latinas, who were 59% more likely to be sterilized than non-Latinas.

"For 70 years, it was legal for Californians to be sterilized just because they were disabled or somebody thought they were disabled. California’s Sterilization Compensation Bill helps provide redress to disabled survivors who were wrongly sterilized against their will," said Susan Henderson, Executive Director, DREDF. "Taking responsibility for this injustice is the necessary next step to guard against future state-sanctioned abuse and discrimination."

While California’s eugenic law was repealed in 1979, a subsequent state audit revealed that at least 144 people had been sterilized during labor and delivery without proper consent while



incarcerated in California women's prisons from 2006 to 2010. Further research indicates that an additional 100 involuntary sterilizations were performed during labor and delivery with an additional small number of other coerced or involuntary sterilizations happening during other surgeries in the late 1990's. As with the sterilizations performed under California's eugenics law, the sterilizations disproportionately affected people of color.

"The sterilizations at the women's prisons primarily targeted Black and Brown women as well as poor white women," said Hafsah Al-Amin, CCWP Program Coordinator. "They were intended to stop the reproduction of a population whom the state would rather see caged, disenfranchised and infertile."

Eugenic sterilization programs are now considered a major human rights abuse. California officials apologized for this historical wrong in 2003. Recently the Los Angeles Board of Supervisors issued a public apology for the non-consensual tubal ligations of Mexican-origin women at USC/LA County Hospital in the 1960s-1970s, yet the history and legacy of California's eugenics laws are little known.

"The legacy of California's eugenics law is well-known and as the prison sterilizations show, the repercussions continue to be felt," said Laura Jimenez, Executive Director, CLRJ. "As reproductive justice advocates, we recognize the insidious impact state-sponsored policies have on the dignity and rights of poor women of color who are often stripped of their ability to form the families they want. This bill is a step in the right direction in remedying the violence inflicted on these survivors."

This bill would help compensate verified survivors of California's eugenic sterilization program and involuntary sterilizations at California women's state prisons as well as establish markers at designated sites that acknowledge the compulsory sterilization of thousands of people in the state, raising awareness of the unjust sterilizations of thousands of people. Although monetary compensation cannot adequately address the harm suffered by sterilization survivors, it is a material acknowledgement of this wrong.



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About California Latinas for Reproductive Justice (CLRJ)

CLRJ is a statewide organization committed to honoring the experiences of Latinas to uphold our dignity, our bodies, sexuality, and families. We build Latinas' power and cultivate leadership through community education, policy advocacy, and community informed research to achieve Reproductive Justice. Learn more about California Latinas for Reproductive Justice at www.californialatinas.org

About Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF)

The Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF), founded in 1979, is a leading national civil rights law and policy center directed by individuals with disabilities and parents who have children with disabilities. DREDF works to advance the civil and human rights of people with disabilities through legal advocacy, training, education, and public policy and legislative development. Learn more about DREDF at <https://dredf.org/>

About California Coalition for Women Prisoners (CCWP)

CCWP is a grassroots social justice organization, with members inside and outside prison, that challenges the institutional violence imposed on women, transgender people, and communities of color by the prison industrial complex (PIC). We see the struggle for racial and gender justice as central to dismantling the PIC and we prioritize the leadership of the people, families, and communities most impacted in building this movement. Learn more at <https://womensprisoners.org>