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Betsy Butler

October 3, 2017

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown, Jr.
Governor of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, California 95814

Re: SB 239 (Wiener) – Urge Signature

Dear Governor Brown,

On behalf of the California Women's Law Center (CWLC), we write to urge your support of SB 239, which would update California law criminalizing people living with HIV. AB 239 will classify HIV in the same manner as other serious communicable diseases by eliminating extra punishment for people living with HIV who engage in consensual sexual activity.

Enacted mainly in the 1980's and fueled by fear and ignorance about HIV and its transmission, these laws unfairly created unique restrictions and harsher punishments for people with HIV. Societal and medical understanding of HIV and AIDS has greatly improved over the last three decades and California law should reflect the current landscape of HIV prevention, care and treatment.

CWLC recognizes that current criminal laws disproportionately impact women and people of color in California. Women living with HIV comprise only 13% of the people with HIV but make up 43% of those criminalized under California's HIV-specific criminal laws. And, while only about half of the people living with HIV in California are African American or Latino, two thirds of people prosecuted under HIV-specific laws are African American or Latino.

CWLC's mission is to advance the potential of women and girls through transformative litigation, policy advocacy, and education. Because HIV-specific laws fuel continued stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV and the communities disproportionately impacted by HIV, CWLC urges you to enact SB 239.

Sincerely,

Betsy Butler
Executive Director

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