

# Rise

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3/24/22

The Honorable Chris Holden  
California State Assembly  
State Capitol, Room 5650  
Sacramento, CA 95814

## Re: AB 2085 (Holden) SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Holden:

On behalf of Rise, we are writing to express our strong support of AB 2085 (Holden), which would help to begin to address the reporting and surveillance of families of color by the “child welfare” system—more accurately described as the family policing system. Specifically, the bill will address concerns with general neglect reporting requirements and clarify the standard for when a mandated reporter is required to make a report of child abuse or severe neglect.

Founded in 2005 and led by parents impacted by the family policing system, Rise believes that parents have the answers for their families and communities. We envision communities that are free from injustice, family policing and separation, and a society that is cultivating new ways of preventing and addressing harm. We imagine a radical commitment to ensuring that all families have what they need to live beyond survival and truly thrive. Based in New York City, Rise has worked with over 350 parents nationwide to write about their experiences with family policing.

As [Rise parent stories](#)<sup>1</sup> and [research shows](#),<sup>2</sup> parents’ fear of reports can prevent them from talking openly about challenges and from accessing resources and support for their families. Parents in Rise’s recent [participatory action research report](#)<sup>3</sup> described NYC’s family policing system as unavoidable in Black and brown communities. Rise knows from our work with impacted parents, and from our partner organizations, that parents have been reported and investigated for suspected child maltreatment when they’ve rinsed their children’s clothes in a tub without detergent, left younger children in the care of an older child, run late for picking their child up from school, or sought medical care for an infant with health challenges.

In a [recent report](#),<sup>4</sup> Rise parent Shakira Paige wrote about how fear of being reported to NYC’s family policing system, the Administration for Children’s Services (ACS), prevented her from asking for support when she needed food and diapers for her children:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.risemagazine.org/2021/06/fear-of-cps-impacts-every-move-i-make/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.risemagazine.org/2020/01/how-fear-of-cps-harms-families/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.risemagazine.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/AnUnavoidableSystem.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.risemagazine.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Rise\\_PeerCareInsights2021\\_Final.pdf](https://www.risemagazine.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Rise_PeerCareInsights2021_Final.pdf)

*"I was in a shelter with three kids and was pregnant with the fourth. It was March 24, and I wasn't going to get food stamps until April 1. I was lucky my kids weren't in school—I would have had an ACS case because we didn't have food. I didn't tell anybody what was going on because I was scared to get an ACS case because I didn't have the necessities for my kids. We ate peanut butter for six days. Then, I ran out of Pampers just hours before 12 o'clock hit and I could go get some. My daughter learned how to use the bathroom at eight months.*

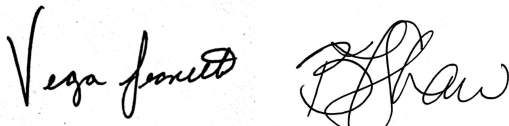
*I was afraid the shelter was going to call ACS and say I was neglecting my kids. I kept the caseworker at the shelter out of our space until I was able to go food shopping. We'd go to the park all day and I'd wait for the caseworkers to leave before we returned to the shelter. It could have escalated. They finally came in while I was food shopping—they are able to come in whenever they want. I'm glad that while they were in there, I was bringing in the food because the caseworker said, 'I was going to call ACS because there was no food here.' I wasn't really aware of pantries at that time. If there was peer support or somebody I could trust that wasn't a mandated reporter, I would have asked for help."*

Children of color are significantly more likely to be reported for allegations of abuse and neglect, despite the vast majority of those allegations being unfounded or unsubstantiated. A recent study showed that half of Black children, as well as half of Native American children, experienced an investigation at some point during their childhood, compared to nearly a quarter of white children.<sup>5</sup> The majority of the calls that come into the child protection hotline are for the catch-all category of neglect, including cases of poverty, lack of resources and domestic violence. Eighty percent of the neglect calls are not substantiated. Consequently, neglect reporting results in undue trauma to parents and children.<sup>6</sup>

Rise calls for immediate steps to be taken to reduce reporting so that fewer families become involved with the system through hotline calls made by mandated reporters—this includes narrowing mandated reporting requirements. Rise has identified mandated reporting as a policy priority and calls for replacing mandated reporting with ensuring families have support and access to community resources. We support AB 2085 and changes to the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act (CANRA) that will reduce traumatic system involvement for families, provide clearer guidelines for mandated reporters and encourage professionals to connect parents to resources and support, instead of reporting families with poverty-related needs.

In an effort to reduce trauma to families of color, and stop penalizing poverty, AB 2085 removes general neglect reporting requirements. Thank you for your continued leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The signature on the left is 'Jeanette Vega' and the signature on the right is 'Bianca Shaw'. Both are written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jeanette Vega and Bianca Shaw, Co-Executive Directors  
Rise

[risemagazine.org](https://risemagazine.org)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.motherjones.com/crime-justice/2021/04/child-protective-services-investigates-half-of-all-black-children-in-california/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nichq.org/insight/our-systems-meant-help-are-hurting-black-families>