OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

SEP 27 2024

To the Members of the California State Senate:

I am returning Senate Bill 254 without my signature.

Beginning January 1, 2027, this bill would require the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) to permit representatives of the news media to interview incarcerated people in person, including both pre-arranged interviews with specified incarcerated people and individuals encountered by a representative of the news media while covering a facility tour, activity, event, or program.

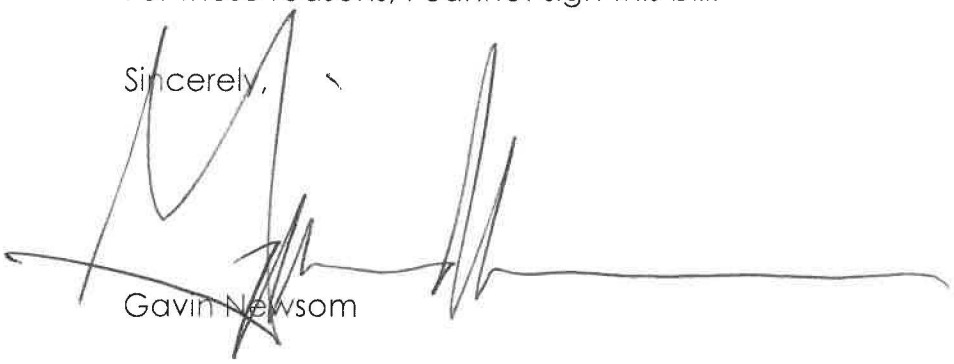
While I appreciate the author's intent to provide greater media access to the state prison system, this bill's expansive provisions risk significant unintended consequences for public safety and victims of crime. Existing CDCR regulations already enable access by the media and state officials to tour facilities and take photos and video. Regulations also allow incarcerated persons to participate in media interviews under appropriate conditions. By removing nearly all discretion to limit media interviews of specific incarcerated individuals, this bill could have the unintended consequence of creating or elevating the celebrity status of certain incarcerated individuals through repeated media appearances, including on television and social media, which could glorify their actions and hurt victims and their families.

Further, this bill would require significant, ongoing resources for CDCR to manage the influx of media requests, ensure the safety of media representatives and incarcerated people while interviews are conducted, prevent the introduction of contraband into facilities, and secure an area in which these interviews would be conducted.

In partnership with the Legislature this year, my Administration has enacted a balanced budget that avoids deep program cuts to vital services and protected investments in education, health care, climate, public safety, housing, and social service programs that millions of Californians rely on. It is important to remain disciplined when considering bills with significant fiscal implications that are not included in the budget, such as this measure.

For these reasons, I cannot sign this bill.

Sincerely,



Gavin Newsom