



CRIME VICTIMS UNITED
The Voice for Victims and Public Safety

March 16, 2021

The Honorable Steve Bradford
Chair, Senate Public Safety Committee
State Capitol, Room 2059
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Senate Bill 82- Opposition

Dear Senator Bradford,

We at Crime Victims United, strongly oppose SB 82. This bill would define the crime of petty theft in the first degree as “taking the property from the person of another or from a commercial establishment by means of force or fear.” Essentially, SB 82 would reduce the crime of Robbery, PC 211, to a misdemeanor petty theft. We firmly believe that reducing robberies to misdemeanor level crimes is a grave injustice to victims of crime and fails to recognize the grave differences between a simple taking and a violent taking from the person of property.

The crime of Robbery is a violent crime. Taking property from a person with the use of force creates a dangerous situation that results in trauma, physical and psychological, to the victim of the crime. According to the Attorney General of California, the crime of Robbery is not uncommon in our communities. Over a nine (9) year period, there were 541,745 robberies reported and each involved a victim of crime. It is noted that not all robberies are reported. Robberies are committed against immigrants, as we have seen lately with the increased crime against Asian Americans, especially elderly people. But many robberies are committed against law abiding individuals.

The recent media focus on robberies against Asian Americans highlights the terror felt by innocent members of our community who become prey to aggressive, hostile, and brazen individuals who believe they can take others’ property using force. Not all robberies result in “great bodily injury” as defined under the law, but they all involve violence, many result in physical injury but all result in psychological injury nonetheless.

The answer to this issue is not to essentially eliminate the crime of robbery, which is violent. Rather, the answer is to provide resource options to the offenders to stop the continued criminal conduct and create more victims.

While Crime Victims United supports thoughtful criminal justice reform however, to say that by simply downgrading this violent crime to a misdemeanor – a crime with essentially no consequences, is a grave injustice to the good people living in California – innocent victims who did nothing but be in the wrong place at the wrong time and who fall prey to robbers. I respectfully suggest that it is a short-sighted development that will provide no help to those caught up in the system. SB 82 fails to recognize the impact of crime on victims, and the struggles of those involved in crime to move beyond the criminal justice system. The solution should not simply make victims of crime invisible. We believe in lower sentences and reduced penalties when appropriate, but we also believe that for many, we can do more to help them be accountable for their actions and to move beyond the criminal justice system. Downgrading violent crimes is not the solution.

For these reasons, I urge you to oppose to Senate Bill 82. If you have questions about this position, please contact, Nina Salarno Besselman, at nina@crimevictimsunited.com.

Sincerely,


Harriet Salarno
Chair/Founder