



Senator Steven Bradford

REPRESENTING THE 35TH DISTRICT

SB 673 (Bradford – EBONY ALERT)

SUMMARY

SB 673 would establish an “Ebony Alert” to address the often ignored or lack of attention to Black youth and young women that are disproportionately missing in California.

SB 673 provides law enforcement with an additional tool, “Ebony Alert” to disseminate timely, accurate information to engage the public and the media to more effectively assist with locating Black Youth and young women that are missing person.

BACKGROUND

According to the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs, approximately 600,000 people go missing every year in the United States.

Data from the 2019 United States Census shows that people who are Black or African American make up 13.4% of the United States population. However, nearly 40% of missing persons are people of color.

Black children make up about 38 percent of all missing child cases and receive less media attention to the fact that they are missing.

Black youth are disproportionately classified as “runaways” in comparison to their white

counterparts who are classified as “missing” and do not receive the Amber Alert.

In addition to making up a disproportionate percentage of all missing people, and receiving less media coverage, Black women and girls are at increased risk of being harmed and trafficked.

The Congressional Black Caucus Foundation report on human trafficking, also found in a two-year study of human trafficking incidents across the country, 40% of sex trafficking victims were identified as Black women.

According to the FBI, 53% of all “juvenile prostitution” arrests are Black children. There is no such thing as “juvenile prostitution” — this is sex trafficking, as juveniles cannot consent to sell sex.

In California, the “Amber Alert,” authorizes law enforcement agencies to use digital messaging on overhead roadway signs to assist in recovery efforts for child abduction cases. As of December 2020, the AMBER Alert system had successfully assisted in the rescue of 1,029 kidnapped children.

One problem with the AMBER Alert system is the strict criteria that a case must fulfill for the message to be broadcast. If these guidelines are not met, an AMBER Alert cannot be issued, and the child is labeled as a runaway. It is



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because of these criteria that many missing Black children are pushed aside.

When a missing child is listed as a runaway, they receive no media coverage, and less police and government resources are available for their recovery.

Being identified as a runaway can also be a legal loophole for law enforcement, because when a child is listed as a runaway, the police are allowed to delay response and investigation time.

This delay is crucial time that could be spent locating a child in danger.

The Legislature intends to provide law enforcement with additional tools to disseminate timely, accurate information to engage the public and the media to more effectively assist with locating missing black children and young women that are disproportionately missing in California.

SOLUTION

SB 673 would authorize a law enforcement agency to request that an Ebony Alert be activated if that agency determines that it would be an effective tool in the investigation of a missing Black youth or young women between the ages of 12 – 25 years.

SB 673 would encourage, but not require, television, cable, satellite, and social media

systems to cooperate with disseminating the information contained in an Ebony Alert.

SUPPORT

Sponsor: CA / Hawaii NAACP

OPPOSITION

None on File

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