



**A VOICE FOR CHOICE  
ADVOCACY**

**LETTER OF OPPOSITION TO SB426 (Pan)**  
**Community-based home visitation pilot program**

March 29, 2017

Dear Senate Committee on Human Services members,

A Voice for Choice Advocacy asks for your **NO VOTE on SB426**.

While A Voice for Choice Advocacy has great concerns for the neglected and abused children of our state, we believe there are numerous laws already in statute that address these issues, both in prevention, identification and post trauma. Those programs should be evaluated and backed for their efficacy, rather than putting a new intrusive home visiting program in place that serves special interest organizations, creates “big brother” surveillance, and likely will cover up real neglect and abuse.

Legislative Counsel’s Digest indicates that “this bill would require particular focus on **independently evaluated program models** with regards to the office’s development of the proposed criteria for awarding the implementation grants in accordance with each plan’s addressing of these elements.”

The SB426 Fact Sheet states SB426 “seeks to establish a pilot program to implement the Community Based Home Visitation Pilot Program based on the Sacramento County Birth & Beyond Family Resource Center model. This program, as modeled in the bill, utilized community members trained through AmeriCorps” (California Volunteers) “**to deliver intensive home visitation services and outreach to families.**” Additionally, “The Pilot Program to be established under SB 426 seeks to implement this model under three family resource centers around the state to test its effectiveness and scalability for long-term implementation as a statewide approach to home visitation”.

It is clear that many of the bills introduced by the California legislature, and especially Senator Pan, this session under the guise of child welfare, really have a very different agenda with an overarching goal to put government surveillance in EVERY home. These bills, including SB426, would monitor the safety of the home, the relationships and physical surroundings within the home to determine the quality of parenting, and the use of health care services, including compliance with vaccination schedules, among other things, which will then be entered into a central database. SB426 will result in unwanted, random and unannounced visits by people calling themselves community members, but in reality are paid by special interests.

While the children who are neglected and abused are often the most vulnerable in our communities coming from very low income and ethnic families, these are also the families that are the most vulnerable for government overreach and unnecessary intrusion into their lives. The home-visiting program proposed in SB426 assumes all are deemed guilty before they are proven innocent, going against one of the most sacred principles in the American criminal justice system.

SB426 states that it will use an evidence-based parenting curriculum that is a nurturing parenting program, as guided by an initial assessment conducted to determine a parent's risk level for child abuse and neglect. But abuse and neglect are not a clearly defined term which is cause for concern when government officials or government approved employees enter the homes of unsuspecting parents. In current CA statute, home visitors are clearly defined to be public health nurses or other qualified personnel who may have a better grasp of child abuse indicators, but SB426 hands this over to community based home visitors with likely no medical training in abuse. All may have prejudices which influence their reports on child abuse potential. Some may believe that refusing to vaccinate children or sending them to bed without supper for disobedience is physical abuse. Others may say parents who leave their children at day care are depriving them of family bonding and increasing their risk of illness and injury. The fact that these home visitors will have the obligation to report everything they see, means that they also have the ability to call CPS on families they deem are abusive or neglectful. As you are likely aware our CPS system is stretched, but also gets funding for each child that is placed in foster care, giving the programs outlined in SB426 the potential to be coercive at best and corrupt at worst.

If this bill passes, the number of reported cases of neglect and abuse are likely to decrease in the areas where the home visiting is conducted, but not because the program is working to do what it aims to, but because the word has gotten out and families go into hiding and are less likely to report them because they are scared that the uninvited home visitation services will be knocking at their door next.

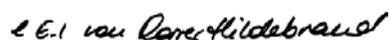
New moms, happy with any opportunity to receive free advice, are rarely informed that the home visitor is not there primarily to help the mother or answer her questions. The visitor is there to observe the family, educate them according to state-defined goals, and report on their progress or resistance. There is no mention of informed consent explaining that parents are under the judgmental gaze of an abuse-evaluating, data-collecting government employee or that parents can refuse home visits. While no one can argue the merits of protecting children, A Voice for Choice Advocacy protests the deceptive, unprofessional and intrusive nature of the home visiting programs outlined in SB426.

This bill, while it may claim to have good intentions behind it, is Orwellian and would create a government cradle-to-grave tracking of newborns. You may feel this is an extreme claim, but look at the details of this bill and ask yourselves if you would submit your baby and family to a comprehensive parenting, child health, and home environment evaluation by a non-expert government employee or special interest contractor approved by the government. If the answer is no and if you were to deny the home visitor access to your home and family you may immediately be under heightened suspicion for neglect and abuse and reported for such. If the real purpose of this bill is to identify neglect and abuse at an early age, SB426 is not the answer.

We urge your **NO VOTE on SB 426**. A yes vote would indicate your support of Orwellian government intrusion and surveillance into every home, a far cry from the Land of the Free in which we live.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Christina Hildebrand  
President, A Voice for Choice Advocacy, Inc.

Giving issues a voice, A Voice for Choice Advocacy advocates for people's rights to be fully informed about the composition, quality, and short- and long-term health effects of all products that go into people's bodies, such as food, water, air, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics.