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OF THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA

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May 8, 2015

Honorable Jimmy Gomez
Chair, Assembly Appropriations Committee
State Capitol, Room 2114
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 516 (Mullin) – OPPOSE UNLESS AMENDED

Dear Assemblymember Gomez:

The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area (LCCR) regrets that we must oppose AB 516 (Mullin), which would unfairly penalize consumers who, through no fault of their own, do not receive their permanent license plates within 90 days. The bill would adversely affect low-income drivers and communities of color, and would create costs that are unjustified and unwarranted.

LCCR is a non-profit organization that works to advance, protect, and promote the legal rights of communities of color, low-income persons, immigrants, and refugees. While we support the intent of AB 516 to provide temporary license tags, in order to make cars identifiable for law enforcement and other legitimate purposes, we are concerned about the impact on consumers, particularly those who are low-income. In current form, the bill allows the use of temporary plates for a 90-day period, but includes no requirement for dealers and service providers to ensure that permanent plates are actually delivered to the consumer within this period. We have previously seen in California (e.g., during the last economic downturn) instances when thousands of new and used car dealers have gone out of business without paying off outstanding liens or submitting paperwork to the DMV, leaving their customers in the lurch. This bill would leave consumers highly vulnerable in such a situation, imposing harsh penalties upon them if they continued to drive with temporary tags. In addition, this bill would make altering a temporary tag a felony offense, creating yet another way to ensnare individuals in California's already bloated criminal justice system.

LCCR recently published, in collaboration with other groups, a report entitled *Not Just A Ferguson Problem: How Traffic Courts Drive Inequality In California*, which shows the many ways that low-income California drivers, and particularly communities of color, are impacted by unfair laws that result in license suspensions and hefty fines, and that lead people into an endless cycle of debt and court involvement from which they cannot extricate themselves. Rather than reverse this trend, AB 516 would contribute to it.

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For these reasons, we must oppose AB 516 unless it is amended to provide reasonable protections for car buyers from the arbitrary 90-day deadline and to eliminate the felony penalty.

Sincerely,



OREN M. SELLSTROM
Legal Director

cc: Assemblymember Kevin Mullin
Appropriations Committee Members