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January 13, 2016

The Honorable Connie Leyva  
Senator, 20<sup>th</sup> District  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: Senate Bill 813 (Leyva) – Support**

Dear Senator Leyva:

The California Women's Law Center (CWLC) proudly co-sponsors Senate Bill 813 (Leyva), the Justice for Victims Act. This bill would eliminate the statute of limitations for rape and related crimes in California and in so doing, emphasize the severity of sexual violence and ensure survivors have access to justice. CWLC joins district attorneys, civil rights attorneys and women and children's rights advocates in support of SB 813.

Currently, the statute of limitations for the prosecution of a felony sex offense is just 10 years, while the prosecution of sexual offenses against a minor must be commenced prior to the victim's 40<sup>th</sup> birthday. These statutes of limitations, which allow perpetrators to escape justice because of the passage of an arbitrary measure of time, are grossly unfair to survivors of sexual offenses. Our laws should protect the rights of victims who have the courage to come forward *whenever* they feel safe doing so. Instead, the current laws silence victims and protect their assailants.

CWLC is the first law center in California dedicated solely to addressing the unique needs of women and girls. Since its founding in 1989, CWLC has worked to break down barriers and advance the potential of women and girls through transformative litigation, policy advocacy and education. CWLC actively supports survivors of sexual violence and works to advance policies to stop these crimes.

SB 813 will send the message to victims of sexual violence that California takes these heinous crimes seriously and that the law is on their side. It will empower victims as they make the important decision to report the crimes committed against them. And SB 813 will diminish one of sexual predators' most powerful weapons: the silence of the men and women who survive their attacks.

As an advocate for justice, CWLC is a committed co-sponsor of SB 813.

Sincerely,



Betsy Butler  
Executive Director