



City of Whittier

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Joe Vinatieri
Mayor

Cathy Warner
Mayor Pro Tem

Octavio Martinez
Council Member

Fernando Dutra
Council Member

Mary Ann Pacheco
Council Member

Brian Saeki
City Manager

April 29, 2024

The Honorable Kevin McCarty
Chair, Assembly Public Safety Committee
1020 N Street, Room 111
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Aisha Wahab
Chair, Senate Public Safety Committee
1020 N Street, Room 545
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Organized Retail Theft Legislation: AB 1802, AB 1972, AB 2406,
AB 2790, SB 928 and SB 982**

Dear Assembly Member McCarty and Senator Wahab:

One of the City of Whittier's strategic goals is to enhance public safety, so our City is pleased that both houses of the Legislature have prioritized retail theft and shoplifting issues as a priority in 2024. As such, the City of Whittier would like to express its support for AB 1802, AB 1972, AB 2406, AB 2790, SB 928 and SB 982, bills that we believe would help to address the critical issue of organized retail theft.

Retail theft continues to be a problem in nearly all California communities. In fact, according to the Public Policy Institute of California, commercial burglary increased statewide since 2020, especially in larger counties with an increase of 13% among 14 of the 15 largest counties. Between 2022 and 2023, the City of Whittier experienced a 43% increase in commercial burglaries and an 11% increase in shoplifting. Rising theft is impacting the City of Whittier's business community, which is comprised of small business owners that are often operating with tighter margins and less robust security systems than larger chains. This increase in retail theft impacts their bottom line through increase in insurance premiums and the sad fact that thefts alter the shopping experience, making it less pleasant for customers, which can lead to fewer sales. City officials and the Whittier Police Department need additional tools to reduce crime and improve the safety of our neighborhoods.

Specifically, regarding organized retail theft, the above-named bills seek changes to existing laws to help address the increase in smash and grab robberies and other organized efforts that continue to happen at an alarming rate. These bills confront the issue of organized retail theft by expanding the definition of the offense to capture organized theft of merchandise stolen from a merchant's cargo, eliminating the sunset date for organized retail theft, addressing minors participating in these crimes, and addressing the theft of critical items, such as baby formula.

Page Two
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While these individual bills are important to continue to make progress on retail theft, these bills are only one part of a comprehensive solution that needs to include prevention, enforcement, and supervision. Considering the alarming rise in retail theft crimes, additional changes are needed to make our communities safer, and these bills are the first step.

Sincerely,



Joe Vinatieri
Mayor

c: Senator Roger Niello
Senator Bob Archuleta
Assembly Member Reginald B. Jones-Sawyer
Assembly Member Juan Alanis
Assembly Member Laurie Davies
Assembly Member Blanca Pacheco
Assembly Member Lisa Calderon
Whittier City Council
Kristine Guerrero, League of California Cities
League of California Cities