



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: Retail Theft Aggregation and Multi-Jurisdictional Legislation
SUPPORT AB 1779 (AS AMENDED) AND AB 1794 (AS AMENDED)**

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 1779 and AB 1794, bills that we believe would help to address the critical issue of aggregating multiple retail theft offenses across a multi-jurisdictional area.

Retail theft continues to be a problem in nearly all California communities. 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. However, between 2022 and 2023, the City of Whittier experienced a 43% increase in commercial burglaries and an 11% increase in shoplifting. On various occasions, multiple small businesses in Whittier have been victims of a string of burglaries that originated outside of our jurisdiction.

Because offenders can avoid higher charges, such as grand theft, by stealing small amounts of items they know are under \$950 across several retail businesses, this form of criminal activity has become more common. Current law provides that multiple thefts can be aggregated to one charge if these incidents can be proven to be "one intention, one general impulse, and one plan." Unfortunately, this law is limited in scope, so the City of Whittier strongly believes it needs strengthening because improved aggregation laws for multiple incidents of theft will not be helpful without active prosecution of cases across several jurisdictions. Expanding coordination and abilities of district attorneys to work together to prosecute theft offenses that occur in several counties will ensure offenders are held accountable.

Page Two
The Honorable Kevin McCarty
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Therefore, we support AB 1779 (as amended on 3/11/2024) and AB 1794 (as amended on 4/1/2024) because they propose several methods of ensuring and clarifying the process of multi-jurisdictional prosecution as well as aggregation of multiple theft incidents with several victims. While these individual bills are important in order 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. Addressing aggregation of multiple theft offenses and cross-county prosecution of offenses are some of the methods that can help solve this growing problem, but additional changes are needed in order to make our communities safer.

Sincerely,



Joe Vinatieri
Mayor

c: Senator Bob Archuleta
Assembly Member Lisa Calderon
Assembly Member Jacqui Irwin
Whittier City Council
Kristine Guerrero, League of California Cities
League of California Cities