

Cal Senate OKs bill that would reduce deportations for minor crimes

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State Sen. Ricardo Lara (D-Bell Gardens) saw his bill aimed at reducing deportations for minor crimes approved by the Senate. (Katie Falkenberg / Los Angeles Times)

SACRAMENTO — The state Senate on Thursday approved a bill that would reduce the maximum possible misdemeanor sentence from one year to 364 days, to reduce deportations of legal residents for minor crimes.

The bill addresses concern that federal law allows legal immigrants to be deported if they are convicted of a crime and given a one-year sentence.

Sen. Ricardo Lara (D-Bell Gardens) said his bill would prevent families from being torn apart if one member commits a crime that is not a felony, such as writing a bad check.

“Many legal residents face deportation for committing minor crimes,” Lara told his colleagues.

SB 1310 was approved by a 31-4 bipartisan vote.

Sen. Joel Anderson (R-Alpine) said his concern is that people accused of crimes including identity theft, cruelty to animals and child neglect are being deported rather than punished through incarceration.

“Many times these people get deported and then they return to our country to re-offend again,” Anderson said.

Those voting against the measure included newly sworn-in state Sen. Mike Morrell (R-Rancho Cucamonga), who did not explain his vote during the floor debate.

The bill next goes to the Assembly for consideration.