[Organization Letterhead]

[DATE]

The Honorable Buffy Wicks

Chair, Appropriations Committee

California State Assembly

1021 O Street, Suite 8220

Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 1225 (Bennett) – as amended May 5, 2025 - SUPPORT**

Dear Assemblymember Wicks,

[INSERT ORGANIZATION NAME] is pleased to support AB 1225 (Bennett), which seeks to enhance accessibility for individuals with disabilities in California’s state parks and beaches. AB 1225 mandates the establishment of an Accessibility Advisory Committee within the Department of Parks and Recreation. This committee—comprising the department’s director, appointed designees, and members with expertise in public accessibility requirements—will provide crucial recommendations to improve accessibility across the state park system and coastal areas.

[OPTIONAL: ADD A PARAGRAPH HERE ABOUT ORGANIZATION AND WHY IT SUPPORTS AB 1225]

Individuals with disabilities deserve equitable access to California’s natural beauty and outdoor recreational opportunities. Many individuals with disabilities are eager to participate in activities such as sightseeing, picnicking, hiking, fishing, hunting, outdoor sports, and camping. However, accessibility barriers often prevent them from fully enjoying these experiences. By prioritizing accessibility improvements, California can ensure that all residents and visitors—regardless of ability—can engage with and appreciate the state’s parks and beaches.

Importantly, AB 1225’s access to nature will be beneficial for physical *and* mental wellbeing. Empirical studies have shown that nature-based recreation provides improvements in cognition, well-being, increase in physical activity, and decreases in anxiety and depression symptoms. This option is vital to marginalized communities including people with disabilities, a population that benefits greatly from the therapeutic benefits of nature.

The history of California’s State Parks system dates back to the establishment of Yosemite Valley and Mariposa Grove in 1864, later transferred to the National Park System in 1906. The state’s oldest designated park, Big Basin Redwoods, was established in 1902—decades before modern accessibility laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. Many of the park trails, facilities, and public access areas were designed without consideration for individuals with disabilities, leaving a legacy of inaccessibility that persists to this day.

Beyond addressing physical access, this bill also serves a broader societal purpose. As a organization seeking to protect and conserve the beautiful nature the state has to offer, this bill provides additional opportunity for the disability community to assist in preserving California ecosystems. The disability community has unique insight to provide in protecting the state’s environment. This community is often impacted by environmental harms, such as air, soil, and water pollution. Health and disabilities occur at high rates when imperiled by environmental harm. People with disabilities should have the opportunity to engage in preserving, conserving, and maintaining California’s nature spaces.

Since the passage of the ADA, society has made significant strides in recognizing and addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. However, barriers to full participation in outdoor spaces remain a systemic issue. AB 1225 provides a critical step toward rectifying these longstanding inequities by establishing an advisory body dedicated to improving accessibility in our state’s parks and coastal areas.

Beyond addressing physical access, this bill also serves a broader societal purpose. The presence of individuals with disabilities in public spaces helps challenge harmful stereotypes and misconceptions. There is a common fallacy that because individuals with disabilities are not frequently seen in parks and beaches, they do not want or are unable to enjoy nature. In reality, the lack of visibility is due to the significant barriers that exist. By making these spaces more accessible, AB 1225 will not only promote inclusion but also foster a cultural shift that affirms the right of all Californians to enjoy the outdoors.

For these reasons, [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] supports AB 1225.

Sincerely,

[INSERT SIGNATURE AND TITLE]