



**LEGISLATION &
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April 20, 2021

Honorable Jim Wood
Chair, Health Committee
California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 6005
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 1169 (GARCIA) as amended April 15, 2021 - SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Wood:

Disability Rights California (DRC), a non-profit advocacy organization that advances and protects the rights of Californians with disabilities, **supports AB 1169** which would create guidelines to ensure sign language interpreters are qualified to interpret effectively and accurately within medical settings. This bill is scheduled for hearing before Assembly Health Committee on April 27, 2021.

According to the National Center for Health Statistics, there are approximately 37 million deaf and hard of hearing people living in the United States. It is estimated that 1 in 10 live with some degree of hearing loss and over 2.2 million are considered deaf. The Office of Deaf Access estimates 3 million deaf and hard of hearing persons reside in California. Unfortunately, the State of California does not require sign language interpreters who facilitate translation for the deaf and hard of hearing within healthcare settings to be certified or licensed. In many instances, the patient is relied on to bring a family member, often a minor child, or friend to interpret for him or her. Interpreters and translators are essential for effective and timely communication between patient and medical professionals. Untrained interpreters are more likely to make errors, violate confidentiality, and add to the risk of poor outcomes, which increases the

risk of patient dissatisfaction, medical errors, unnecessary testing, poor adherence, and malpractice exposure.

AB 1169, would require the California Department of Public Health, before January 1, 2024, to conduct a study – with the collaboration of professionals in the field of sign language interpretation and members of the d/Deaf community – , to establish and implement guidelines pursuant to which it shall determine which testing organizations, agencies, or educational institutions will be approved to administer tests for certification of interpreters in medical settings for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

DRC strongly supports AB 1169. Please contact me if you have any questions about our position or if I can provide any further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Harris". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent horizontal stroke at the end.

Eric Harris
Director of Public Policy
Disability Rights California

cc: Honorable Members, Assembly Health Committee
Honorable Eduardo Garcia, California State Assembly
Jose Sanchez, Office of Assemblymember Garcia