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June 10, 2021

Honorable Steven Bradford
Chair, Public Safety Committee
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 2031
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 256 (KALRA) as amended May 24, 2021 SUPPORT

Dear Senator Bradford:

Disability Rights California (DRC), a non-profit advocacy organization that advances and protects the rights of Californians with disabilities, **supports AB 256** the California Racial Justice Act for All, which will provide a mechanism for relief for those whose convictions or sentences were based upon race, ethnicity, or national origin. This bill will extend the essential protections of the California Racial Justice Act (AB 2542, 2020) to all Californians.

With the Racial Justice Act, California took a profound step forward in addressing institutionalized and implicit racial bias in our criminal courts by empowering defendants to object to charges, convictions, or punishment if they can show that anyone involved in their case — a judge, attorney, officer, expert witness or juror — demonstrated bias during the process, or if they can show statistical evidence of demographic inequities in charges, convictions, or sentences for the same crime. However, this legislation was prospective; it excluded those who had been harmed prior to January 1, 2021 by the racial bias and discrimination that has long permeated our criminal legal system.

If prohibiting racism in our courts and providing a person a means to remedy racial bias in their case is the right thing to do, it is the right thing to do for everyone. Those with prior, racially biased convictions and sentences deserve equal justice under the law and have waited long enough. Additionally, providing a mechanism for retroactive relief will allow the state to realize significant court and correctional savings.

For these reasons, DRC supports AB 256, the California Racial Justice Act for All, which will make the Racial Justice Act retroactive to ensure that everyone is afforded an opportunity to pursue justice.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gregory Cramer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gregory Cramer
Senior Legislative Advocate
Disability Rights California

cc: Honorable Members, Senate Public Safety Committee
Honorable Ash Kalra, California State Assembly
Ryan Guillen, Legislative Director, Office of Assemblymember Kalra