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June 22, 2021

Honorable Steven Bradford  
Chair, Public Safety Committee  
California State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 2059  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 481 (Chiu) – 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 481**. This bill is scheduled for hearing before Senate Public Safety Committee on June 29, 2021.

Disability Rights California (DRC) is pleased to support AB 481, which seeks to regulate the use of military equipment by local law enforcement by requiring agencies to get approval from their local governing body prior to applying for and using such equipment, and to provide a public impact statement that outlines the intended use and cost of such equipment.

DRC supports efforts to prevent violent interactions with police and people with mental or physical disabilities. People with mental health disabilities are disproportionately harmed or killed in interactions with police, in part due to the equipment and tools law enforcement agencies are able use. This proposal is critical because the militarization of police departments leads to increased civilian deaths, especially among populations with disabilities and communities of color. This bill would provide crucial local government oversight, and allow the public to have a voice in determining

the military grade weapons and equipment that are brought into their communities.

Recent events have raised questions about when and how police choose to deploy military equipment. In 2020, peaceful protests in California and across the country were met with increasingly militarized responses by local law enforcement. This past year, law enforcement in Walnut Creek, CA and Orange, CA used military vehicles including Lenco BearCats to disperse peaceful protestors. The decision of how and when to deploy the vehicles was left up to the individual officers at the scene, with no uniform protocol. Last summer, in Sacramento, CA, police donned riot helmets, and aimed assault rifles from armored vehicles at peaceful demonstrators to clear an assembled crowd.

This legislation is necessary to begin the process of holding law enforcement agencies accountable through increased oversight and transparency of military equipment acquisition.

For these reasons, DRC respectfully requests your support of AB 481 (Chiu).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Harris", with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Eric Harris  
Director of Public Policy  
Disability Rights California

cc: Honorable Members, Senate Public Safety  
Hersh Gupta, Office of Assemblymember Chiu  
Nicole Restmeyer, Office of Assemblymember Chiu