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July 14, 2021

Honorable Anthony Portantino
Chair, Appropriations Committee
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 5050
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 540 (Petrie-Norris) as amended April 27, 2021 - SUPPORT

Dear Senator Portantino:

Disability Rights California (DRC), a non-profit advocacy organization that advances and protects the rights of Californians with disabilities, **supports AB 540**. This bill is scheduled to be heard before Senate Appropriations Committee on July 15, 2021.

AB 540 would help more seniors remain in their homes and communities by improving beneficiary awareness of and access to the Program for All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE). PACE is designed to provide care for California's frail population as an alternative to institutionalization. PACE programs coordinate and deliver preventive, primary, acute and long-term care services to older adults who would otherwise be in nursing homes so they can continue to live in the community.

Research shows that PACE achieves significant reductions in hospital use, significant improvements in health status and quality of life and has high rates of beneficiary and family satisfaction while relieving caregiver burdens. Additionally, it is estimated that PACE saved California over \$69 million in 2020.

Even though PACE is a model of care for seniors, many benefactors are unaware of PACE and how it may benefit them. Many seniors with higher needs could benefit from direct state engagement and referrals for PACE services.

AB 540 would improve beneficiary awareness and access to PACE by requiring (1) PACE to be offered as a Medi-Cal plan choice, (2) PACE to be identified as a Medicare plan choice and included in all enrollment materials and information, (3) Department of Health care services to establish an auto referral process to referral beneficiaries to PACE, (4) assessment processes to include criteria to identify and provide for referral to PACE and (5) ensure continuity of enrollment by exempting Medi-Cal beneficiaries who enrolled in PACE from mandatory or passive enrollment Medi-Cal managed care.

For these reasons, DRC supports this bill. 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 "E" and "H".

Eric Harris
Director of Public Policy
Disability Rights California

cc: Honorable Members, Senate Appropriations Committee
Honorable Cottie Petrie-Norris, California State Assembly
Lizzie Cootsona, Legislative Director, Office of Assemblymember
Petrie-Norris