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April 27, 2021

Honorable Lorena Gonzales  
Chair, Appropriations Committee  
California State Assembly  
Capitol Building, Room 2114  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 655 (KALRA) as amended March 25, 2021 – SUPPORT**

Dear Assemblymember Gonzales:

Disability Rights California (DRC), a non-profit advocacy organization that advances and protects the rights of Californians with disabilities, **supports AB 655**. This bill is scheduled for hearing before Assembly Appropriations committee on April 28, 2021.

After the insurrection we witnessed on January 6, 2021 at the U.S. Capitol building by right wing extremists with the apparent cooperation, participation, and support of some law enforcement and military personnel, the threat that extremist infiltration poses to equal justice and the rule of law is more evident than ever before. Continued failure to address extremism, racism, and bias among peace officers contributes to the erosion of public confidence in the legitimacy and fairness of our justice system.

The CLEAR Act would ensure all peace officers in the state of California applying for employment undergo a background check that includes screening whether the officer holds official membership in a hate group or participated in public expressions of hate or violence. Additionally, discovery of these expressions, membership, or participation with hate groups can become grounds for disciplinary review and termination.

Unfortunately hate crimes against people with disabilities are inconsistently reported. Most researchers believe that people with disabilities are harmed or killed often in hate crimes. The disabled community is among the most vulnerable, and needs to be protected and served by law enforcement like any other community. The disability community is often forgotten about when hate crimes or incidents are discussed and explored. Disabled people, including people with invisible disabilities, such as a mental health disabilities, learning disabilities, and intellectual or developmental disabilities, often are the victims of hate crimes.

The most recent analysis of a National Crime Victimization Survey by the U.S. Bureau of Justice indicates that people with disabilities are at least 2.5 times more likely to experience violence than those without. When a crime is motivated by a person's physical, intellectual or psychiatric disability, it's a hate crime. But disability hate crimes in this country are woefully under-reported, under-investigated and under-prosecuted, said Jack Levin, professor emeritus at Northeastern University and co-director of the Brudnick Center on Violence and Conflict. National Disability Rights Network, was part of a coalition formed during the Clinton Administration that pushed for inclusion of people with disabilities in federal hate-crime legislation.<sup>1</sup> Hate crimes against the disability community have occurred for centuries, including the horrifying violence against the disabled community during the holocaust, where hundreds of thousands of people with disabilities were killed.

People who intersect with disability, race and gender are often discriminated against in many ways for a variety of reasons.<sup>2</sup> These are most often the victims of law enforcement related violence and hate. This bill could point us in the right direction to eliminate hate groups within law enforcement.

Recent allegations have revived long-standing concerns that Los Angeles Sheriffs are part of their own gang within the department. Multiple internal investigations, including federal probe by the FBI looked into these groups, with many civil liberties advocates accusing the Sheriff's Department of ignoring the activity. Alan Romero, an attorney, stated, "We have a gang

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<sup>1</sup> The Invisible Hate Crime, Southern Poverty Law Center. [The Invisible Hate Crime | Southern Poverty Law Center \(splcenter.org\)](#) "Return to Main Document"

<sup>2</sup> Include NYC. <https://www.includenyc.org/content/perspectives-disability-and-intersectionality#:~:text=The%20intersection%20of%20identities%20%E2%80%94%20gender,why%20people%20stare%20%E2%80%94%20or%20discriminate>. August 2017. "Return to Main Document"

here that has grown to the point where it dominates every aspect of life at the Compton station.” Donta Taylor, a 31 year old man, who was shot and killed by deputies and is represented by Attorney John Sweeney, helped reveal in a civil case, that there was a Compton clique.<sup>3</sup> Violent arrests help officers earn notoriety in LASD-based “Executioners” gang, where officers proudly received tattoos for the work that they did within the department. These officers will often receive tattoos during an “inking party” to celebrate the officer successfully shooting a person they attempt to arrest.<sup>4</sup>

The CLEAR Act will help eliminate hate groups in law enforcement and ensure that officers will provide proper public safety to all people in California, including people with disabilities.

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 dot above the "i" and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Eric Harris  
Director of Public Policy  
Disability Rights California

cc: Honorable Members, Assembly Appropriations Committee  
Honorable Ash Kalra, California State Assembly  
Zena Hallak, Legislative Aide, Office of Assemblymember Kalra

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<sup>3</sup> LA County Deputy Alleges “Executioner” Gang Dominates Compton Sheriff Station.  
<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-07-30/sheriff-clique-compton-station-executioners>. July 30, 2020. [“Return to Main Document”](#)

<sup>4</sup> Deputy Alleges Violent Arrests to Earn Notoriety in LASD based Executioners Gang.  
<https://abc7.com/compton-deputy-gang-executioners-attacked-beating/7292673/> October 23, 2020.  
[“Return to Main Document”](#)