



**LEGISLATION &
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July 6, 2021

Honorable Thomas J. Umberg
Chair, Judiciary Committee
California State Senate
Capitol Building, Room 5097
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 829 (Levine) as amended June 289, 2021 – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Umberg:

Disability Rights California (DRC), a non-profit advocacy organization that advances and protects the rights of Californians with disabilities, **supports AB 829**. This bill is scheduled for hearing before Senate Judiciary Committee on July 13, 2021.

While most undocumented children in foster care qualify for immigration relief, that relief is difficult to obtain without legal assistance. Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) was enacted by the federal government to help undocumented children obtain lawful permanent residency in the United States, and in turn, provide greater stability for these young people. However, undocumented children who leave foster care without applying for SIJS or other forms of immigration relief unintentionally forfeit their opportunity to obtain these services, resulting in a difficult and uncertain transition to successful adulthood.

Under current law, there is no mechanism to identify undocumented children and nonminor dependents to ensure they receive access to legal assistance necessary to obtain immigration relief. This bill will help ensure that undocumented dependents and nonminor dependents in foster care are provided access to receive immigration assistance by requiring

counties to make best efforts to connect undocumented youth with immigration legal assistance. By ensuring counties track the number of undocumented youth in their jurisdiction and report their processes to do so, we can ensure youth have the best chance of being connected to immigration assistance and the process by which children are connected to immigration services. This data collection will also enable the State to better understand where existing gaps in services and resources are to better assist these youth.

Many undocumented children with disabilities are abused and neglected. Disability Rights California put together a report, “The Detention of Immigrant Children with Disabilities in California: A Snapshot.” The report stated that many children arrive having experienced trauma, including symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other mental health conditions. Some children also have physical, sensory, or other disabilities. DRC wrote the report in order to increase transparency and ensure that fair treatment of immigrant children with disabilities occurred.¹

AB 829 is needed to support undocumented foster youth so they can pursue the forms of immigration relief that they qualify for. AB 829 would be a move in the right direction for undocumented children who need legal services. 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", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Eric Harris
Director of Public Policy
Disability Rights California

cc: Honorable Members, Senate Judiciary Committee
Honorable Marc Levine, California State Assembly
Sierra Sheppard, Legislative Aide, Office of Assemblymember Levine

¹ The Detention of Immigrant Children with Disabilities in California. [DRC-ORR-Report.pdf](#) ([disabilityrightsca.org](#)). 2019 [“Return to Main Document”](#)