



**LEGISLATION & PUBLIC
INFORMATION UNIT**

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March 7, 2017

Honorable Richard Bloom
California State Assembly
Capitol Building, Room 2003
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 411 (BLOOM) – SUPPORT IF AMENDED

Dear Assembly Member Bloom:

Disability Rights California, a non-profit advocacy organization that advances and protects the rights of Californians with disabilities, supports AB 411 if amended. This bill is scheduled for hearing in the Assembly Public Safety Committee on March 14, 2017.

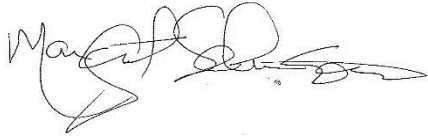
This bill would allow certain witnesses, including certain child witnesses, to be accompanied by a dog, trained in providing emotional support, while testifying. It also sets minimum training requirements for the dogs and would require a motion stating the need for the dog. Within the discretion of the court, it can remove the dog in certain situations.

We support the intent of the bill to allow witnesses who need emotional support to have specially trained facility or therapy dogs to provide the support. We would like a provision indicating the provisions of the bill do not apply to witnesses who use service animals for mental health or other disabilities. Based on our experience, we believe there is a risk that court personnel may confuse facility and therapy dogs with psychiatric and other service dogs, and apply the conditions in the bill to service dogs. The federal Americans with Disabilities Act and the state Disabled Persons Act would prevail if anyone tried to apply this bill's facility and therapy dog requirements to a service animal. However, it would be best if the bill would

specify the requirements for facility and therapy dogs does not apply to service animals.

For these reasons, we support this bill if amended. Please contact me if you have any questions about our position on this bill.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Margaret Johnson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Margaret Johnson, Esq.
Advocacy Director
Disability Rights California

cc: Naeemah Charles, Fellow, Office of Assembly Member Bloom
Honorable Chair and Members, Assembly Public Safety Committee
Sandy Uribe, Counsel, Assembly Public Safety Committee