



**LEGISLATION AND
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August 15, 2019

Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
Capitol Building, 1st Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 640 (FRAZIER) – REQUEST FOR SIGNATURE

Dear Governor Newsom:

Disability Rights California (DRC), a non-profit advocacy organization that advances and protects the rights of Californians with disabilities, **supports AB 640 and requests your signature.**

This bill would require that the Office of Emergency Services' training course for district attorneys for the investigation of sexual assault cases also cover the investigation and prosecution of sexual abuse cases involving victims with developmental disabilities.

People with developmental disabilities are at a disproportionately high risk of abuse, neglect, and criminal victimization. Experts conservatively estimate that people with disabilities are at least four times more likely to be victimized than people without disabilities. Individuals with an intellectual impairment are at the highest risk of victimization. The rate of sexual assault is two to ten times higher for people with disabilities when compared to people without disabilities.

Law enforcement and others in the abuse response system often lack the training and skills to interact with and interview individuals with disabilities. There are often critical delays in the response of investigators to reports of abuse, neglect, and criminal victimization. Criminal investigations are not

always thorough and often produce insufficient evidence for criminal prosecution. Disability-related bias and stigma may include assumptions that individuals with disabilities are unreliable or not credible and will not make good witnesses, resulting in failure to timely and thoroughly interview the victim or witnesses with disabilities, if at all. Many investigations into instances of abuse and neglect go on for months or years, and some are never completed. Cases that make it into the criminal justice system are not rigorously prosecuted; assailants are frequently given lighter sentences or plead to lesser crimes.

The Assembly Appropriations Committee noted that the fiscal impact with this bill is potentially minor and absorbable with one-time costs of training on investigations and prosecutions of sexual abuse cases involving victims with developmental disabilities.

Adding to training courses the particular issues concerning sexual abuse cases involving victims with developmental disabilities for district attorneys is a critical component of the criminal enforcement continuum.

For these reasons, DRC supports this bill and requests your signature. 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
Legislative Advocate 2
Disability Rights California

cc: Honorable Jim Frazier, California State Assembly
Amber Garcia, Legislative Aide, Office of Assembly Member Stone
Melissa Immel, Deputy Legislative Secretary, Office of Legislative Affairs
Tammy Trinh, Legislative Research Assistant, Office of Legislative Affairs