



**LEGISLATION AND  
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August 5, 2019

Honorable Anthony Portantino  
Chair, Appropriations Committee  
California State Senate  
Capitol Building, Room 3086  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 640 (FRAZIER) as introduced February 15, 2019 – 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 640**. This bill is scheduled for hearing before the Senate Appropriations Committee on August 12, 2019.

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 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. 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 initial "E" and "H".

Eric Harris  
Legislative Advocate 2  
Disability Rights California

cc: Honorable Members, Senate Appropriations Committee  
Shaun Naidu, Consultant, Senate Appropriations Committee  
Honorable Jim Frazier, California State Assembly  
Amber Garcia, Legislative Aide, Office of Assembly Member Stone  
Eric Csizmar, Policy Consultant, Senate Republican Caucus

Committee