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August 30, 2018

Honorable Jerry Brown
Governor of California
Capitol Building, 1st Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 686 (SANTIAGO) as amended August 17, 2018 – REQUEST
FOR SIGNATURE**

Dear Governor Brown:

Disability Rights California, a non-profit advocacy organization that advances and protects the rights of Californians with disabilities, **supports AB 686 and requests your signature.**

As an organization, we have an established interest in furthering fair housing in California. It is not uncommon for persons with disabilities to experience discrimination in housing, and strengthened state fair housing laws serve to combat that discrimination. AB 686 sends a strong message that California is steadfast in its commitment to creating equal opportunity for all.

The federal Fair Housing Act of 1968 contains a powerful mandate requiring that federal agencies actively work to dismantle segregation and create equal housing opportunities. This is known as the obligation to “affirmatively further fair housing” (AFFH). In 2015, the Obama Administration issued regulations on affirmatively furthering fair housing. This regulation, known as the AFFH Rule, requires states, local governments, and public housing authorities that receive HUD funds to take “meaningful actions, in addition to combating discrimination, that overcome patterns of segregation and foster inclusive communities free

from barriers that restrict access to opportunity based on protected characteristics.” 24 C.F.R. § 5.152. The federal AFFH Rule is now under attack. Legislation has been introduced to eliminate it, and the HUD Secretary has derided it as “social-engineering” in a 2015 op-ed.

While California’s Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA) goes beyond the federal Fair Housing Act in many ways, it currently lacks an explicit AFFH obligation. AB 686 would strengthen FEHA by introducing an AFFH obligation in state law.

California has a long way to go in fulfilling the promise of AFFH. Historic patterns of segregation persist and many people with disabilities along with people of color and other minority groups live in neighborhoods with severe environmental health burdens. Displacement and disinvestment threaten the stability of low-income communities.

The statewide affordable housing crisis significantly affects people with disabilities. People with disabilities are often on fixed incomes and have to spend a majority of their paycheck on housing. The disproportionate spending on housing leaves them vulnerable to homelessness and unable to afford necessities like food, healthcare, and transportation. AB 686 would play a key role in tackling issues of segregation and inclusion, as well as displacement and disinvestment in low-income communities.

For these reasons, we support this bill and requests your signature. 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 "Curtis Child". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Curtis" and last name "Child" clearly distinguishable.

Curtis Child
Legislative Director
Disability Rights California

cc: Honorable Miguel Santiago, California State Assembly
Brandon Gaytan, Legislative Aide, Office of Assembly Member
Santiago
Graciela Castillo-Krings, Deputy Legislative Secretary, Office of
Legislative Affairs
Nathan Bentham, Legislative Assistant, Office of Legislative Affairs
Shamus Roller, National Housing Law Project
Anya Lawler, Western Center on Law and Poverty
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