



**LEGISLATION & PUBLIC
INFORMATION UNIT**
1831 K Street
Sacramento, CA 95811-4114
Tel: (916) 504-5800
TTY: (800) 719-5798
Intake Line: (800) 776-5746
Fax: (916) 504-5807
www.disabilityrightsca.org

July 10, 2018

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

RE: AB 686 (SANTIAGO) as amended June 13, 2018 – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Portantino:

Disability Rights California, a non-profit advocacy organization that advances and protects the rights of Californians with disabilities, supports AB 686. This bill is scheduled for hearing in the Senate Appropriations Committee on August 6, 2018.

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.

As noted in the Assembly Appropriations Committee analysis, the costs for this bill are either unknown or absorbable by the state entities and the local costs could be offset by incorporating and using portions of the current federal Assessment of Fair Housing, which are already prepared to comply with federal rules.

For these reasons, we support this bill. 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
Honorable Members, Senate Appropriations Committee
Mark McKenzi, Staff Director, Senate Appropriations Committee
Doug Yoakam, Policy Consultant, Senate Republican Caucus
Committee
Anya Lawler, Western Center on Law and Poverty