January 9, 2020

Honorable Eloise Gómez Reyes
Assembly Human Services Committee
1020 N Street, Room 124
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 823 (Arambula) – SPONSOR

Dear Assembly Member Eloise Gómez Reyes:

Disability Rights California (DRC), a non-profit advocacy organization that advances and protects the rights of Californians with disabilities, sponsors AB 823. This bill is scheduled for hearing before the Assembly Human Services committee.

Existing law requires that the Department of Developmental Services provides various services and support for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. The Department is also required to establish policies and procedures for the intellectual and developmental disability community. California is currently closing state-run Developmental Services throughout the state. A safety net for consumers who experience behavioral health crisis is mobile crisis services.

This bill would expand the availability of crisis services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. This is important because there are regions of the state where mobile crisis is not reasonably available.

Mobile crisis services provide families with trained staff, who are able to give services for an individual with an intellectual and developmental disability. This bill would require that the staff give these services in the
least restrictive way possible to the individual in need. These are services that some families need several times per year.

Mobile crisis is much better than the alternative of sending a consumer to the emergency room or psychiatric hospital. Staff in emergency rooms often do not have the training that is required to help consumers. Mobile crisis is also a better option than calling law enforcement. Law enforcement is typically called when there are individuals in danger of being harmed. Law enforcement often does not have the proper training for these situations and can end up detaining the individual who is in crisis, which can lead to more problems.

This bill would help directly meet the needs of consumers who experience crisis but live in areas far from their nearest mobile crisis center.

This bill would also require that regional centers post the memorandum of understanding (MOU) between regional centers and county mental health agencies on the regional center’s websites. The purpose of the MOU is to coordinate and develop a plan of procedures for the services that will be provided for individuals who are consumers in the regional center and county mental health agency system.

These MOUs can be helpful for consumers and families so that they are able to better understand the procedure for their services in both systems.

For these reasons, DRC sponsors this bill. Please contact me if you have any questions about our position or if I can provide any further information.

Sincerely,

Eric Harris
Legislative Advocate 2
Disability Rights California

cc: Honorable Members, Assembly Human Services
Marla Cowan, Consultant, Office of Assembly Member Arambula