



**LEGISLATION & PUBLIC
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July 10, 2017

Honorable Scott Wiener
Chair, Human Services Committee
California State Senate
Capitol Building, Room 4066
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 959 (HOLDEN) – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Wiener:

Disability Rights California (DRC), a non-profit advocacy organization that advances and protects the rights of Californians with disabilities, supports AB 959. This bill is scheduled for hearing in the Senate Human Services Committee on July 11, 2017.

Existing law states the right of individuals with developmental disabilities to make choices in their own lives, and requires public or private agencies that receive state funds to serve persons with developmental disabilities to respect the choices made by consumers and provide consumers with understandable information to aid in their choices. Existing law also grants these rights to consumers' parents, legal guardians, or conservators.

Among other provisions in the bill, AB 959 amends Welfare and Institutions Code Section 4502.1 to require regional centers to provide information in a manner that is culturally and linguistically appropriate for the consumer, or, when appropriate, the consumer's parents, legal guardian, conservator, or authorized representative, including providing alternative communication services, as required by Article 9.5 (commencing with Section 11135) of Chapter 1 of Part 1 of Division 3 of Title 2 of the Government Code and the implementing regulations.

Ensuring equity and reducing disparities in the regional center system is a priority for Disability Rights California. From our experience, consumers and their families continue to find interactions with the regional centers challenging because of linguistic and cultural barriers. This bill ensures that individuals with developmental disabilities from diverse communities have language access to better participate in the regional center service system.

The amended language in 4502.1 is a step toward in the right direction toward reducing disparities in the regional center system and empowers the consumers and families so they can access the regional center services and supports they need. For these reasons, we support this bill. Please contact me if you have any questions about our position.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Evelyn M. Abouhassan".

Evelyn M. Abouhassan
Senior Legislative Advocate
Disability Rights California

cc: Honorable Chris Holden, California State Assembly
Morrise Richardson, Fellow, Office of Assembly Member Holden
Honorable Members, Senate Human Services Committee