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April 25, 2017

Honorable Marc Berman  
Chair, Elections and Redistricting Committee  
California State Assembly  
Capitol Building, Room 6011  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 985 (ALLEN) – OPPOSE**

Dear Assembly Member Allen:

Disability Rights California (DRC), a non-profit advocacy organization that advances and protects the rights of Californians with disabilities, opposes AB 985. This bill is scheduled for hearing in the Assembly Elections and Redistricting Committee on April 26, 2017.

This bill would require that the identification envelope include the last four digits of the voter's California driver's license or identification card number or, if unavailable, the last four digits of the voter's social security number. The bill would require the elections official to verify the accuracy of the voter's numeric identifying information. If the numeric identifying information cannot be verified, the bill would prohibit counting the ballot. This bill would require a voter to provide photographic identification at the polling place before receiving a ballot. The bill would specify the forms of photographic identification that are acceptable.

AB 985 will unnecessarily restrict voter participation. Many voters with disabilities do not have or cannot afford a driver's license or a passport, or the underlying documents necessary to obtain such identification. Further, transportation to obtain such documents can be challenging and expensive. A November 2006 survey found that 11% of United States citizens do not

have government-issued photo identification (Brennan Center for Justice, *Citizens without Proof: A Survey of Americans' Possession of Documentary Proof of Citizenship and Photo Identification* (New York: Brennan Center for Justice, 2006), available at

[http://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/d/download\\_file\\_39242.pdf](http://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/d/download_file_39242.pdf), 1). Although AB 985 provides for the provision of a free identification card, the legislation does not delineate what documentation is necessary to obtain this free identification, and whether the costs associated with obtaining this documentation will be covered.

Voter identification laws like AB 985 are a solution in search of a problem. There is no evidence that the type of fraud AB 985's photo identification requirement purports to address—voters who misrepresent their identity—is anything but an anomaly.

Voter identification laws also waste precious taxpayer dollars. States incur sizeable costs when implementing voter identification laws, including the cost of educating the public, training poll workers, and providing identification to voters.

Not only are voter identification laws expensive and unnecessary, they unfairly depress voter participation. A 2014 study from the Government Accountability Office found that strict photo identification voting laws reduce election turnouts by two to three percentage points (Government Accountability Office, *Issues Related to State Voter Identification Laws*, report to Congressional requesters, September 2014, available at <http://www.gao.gov/assets/670/665966.pdf>, 48), which can translate into tens of thousands of votes lost in a single state.

For these reasons, we oppose 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 'Margaret Johnson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Margaret Johnson, Esq.  
Advocacy Director  
Disability Rights California

cc: Honorable Travis Allen, California State Assembly  
Stephanie Freedman, Chief of Staff, Office of Assembly Member  
Allen  
Kern Chhikara, Legislative Aide, Office of Assembly Member Allen  
Honorable Members, Assembly Elections and Redistricting  
Committee  
Nichole Becker, Principal Consultant, Assembly Elections and  
Redistricting Committee