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Media Statement

For Immediate Release

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Disability Rights California responds to student death at Guiding Hands School

DRC Advocates for using other methods instead of restraint

(Sacramento, CA – December 11, 2018) Disability Rights California is saddened to learn of the death of the 13-year-old student with disabilities who died after being restrained by staff at Guiding Hands School last week. This is a horrific tragedy and our hearts go out to the student's family.

We do not know all of the facts in this particular situation, but the reported facts surrounding the death are cause for great concern. The facts reported about the incident indicate that it involved a prone restraint, a practice *known* to be dangerous and life threatening.

As an advocacy organization that protects the rights, safety and well-being of people with disabilities, DRC for many years has advocated for and sponsored legislation to prohibit the use of restraints on students. Instead, we advocate for the use of proven and effective positive behavior supports,

comprehensive staff training, and interventions that do not put students at risk of bodily harm, or death.

This year, the Governor signed AB 2657 (Weber), sponsored by DRC, to protect students who have disability related behaviors. The bill, which goes into effect on January 1, requires educational providers to avoid, whenever possible, seclusion or behavioral restraints and to use these practices in the very limited case of when there is a clear and present danger of serious physical harm to self or others. The bill expressly prohibits restraint that obstruct or impair breathing. If a prone restraint is used at all, the student must be monitored for signs of distress.

Legal restrictions, however, are only effective if they are followed. We believe AB 2657 is an important step toward providing better protections for students. However, we remain committed to the elimination of the use of restraints in schools for the very reason the recent death makes evident: they can be lethally dangerous.

Disability Rights California is a non-profit organization founded in 1978. We protect the rights of people with disabilities. Visit disabilityrightsca.org.