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June 25, 2021

Honorable Marc Berman
Chair, Elections Committee
California State Assembly
Capitol Building, Room 3123
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 503 (BECKER) as amended June 15, 2021 - SUPPORT

Dear Assembly Member Berman:

Disability Rights California (DRC), a non-profit advocacy organization that advances and protects the rights of Californians with disabilities, **supports SB 503**. This bill is scheduled for hearing before Assembly Elections Committee on June 30, 2021.

In the general election in November of 2020, vote by mail was used at a high level for Californians. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many voters decided that the best way for them to remain safe was to vote from home and mail in their ballots to avoid large crowds.

Studies have shown that signature matches disproportionately impact voters with disabilities. Voters with disabilities, including seniors, are more likely to vote by mail and would have to sign their name on their ballots. A voter's signature changes over time and for people with disabilities, a signature can change nearly every other time one is written. Some people with disabilities might have conditions that make it difficult to sign their name the same way multiple times. Some of these disabilities include epilepsy, cerebral palsy, and vision impairments.

Requiring a signature on a document can be discriminatory against people with disabilities and put them at risk from not being counted properly. Using an "X" or signature stamp as a signature can be crucial for voters with disabilities and in many cases is viewed as a reasonable accommodation. DRC advocates that a signature made using a mark, such as an "X" or a signature stamp is presumed valid and must be accepted if it meets the requirements set forth in Elections Code section 354.5. DRC is working with the author's office to ensure that this language is included in the bill as it moves forward.

Voters with disabilities should have an opportunity to participate in a fair election process that is accessible to all voters. SB 503 will help make that become more of a reality.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Harris". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent "E" and "H".

Eric Harris
Director of Public Policy
Disability Rights California

cc: Honorable Members, Assembly Elections Committee
Honorable Josh Becker, California State Senate
Garrett Jensen, Legislative Aide, Office of Senator Becker