



**LEGISLATION AND
COMMUNICATIONS UNIT**

1831 K Street
Sacramento, CA 95811-4114
Tel: (916) 504-5800
TTY: (800) 719-5798
Intake Line: (800) 776-5746
Fax: (916) 504-5807
www.disabilityrightsca.org

April 14, 2021

The Honorable Melissa Hurtado
Chair, Senate Committee on Human Services
1020 N Street, Room 521
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 518 (Laird) as amended April 13, 2021: Self-Determination –
CO-SPONSOR**

Dear Senator Hurtado:

Disability Rights California (DRC) writes to co-sponsor SB 518 (Laird), a bill also sponsored by Disability Voices United (DVU), which will strengthen California's Self-Determination law by adding transparency and oversight measures to improve its implementation as Self-Determination rolls out statewide in 2021. This bill will be heard in Senate Human Services Committee on April 20, 2021.

The mission of Disability Rights California is to defend, advance, and strengthen the rights and opportunities of people with disabilities. These core principles guided our strong support of the Self-Determination law, which promised to give people with intellectual and developmental disabilities greater control and flexibility over the services they receive, how they receive them, and who provides them. However, that early promise has yet to be fully realized. In the eight years since passage of this groundbreaking law, implementation of the Self-Determination program has been subject to substantial delays and barriers to full participation. Although the initial phase-in period allowed up to 2500 participants to enter the program, as of February 2021, regional centers have processed only 500 participants. The Statewide Self-Determination Advisory Committee has documented the numerous implementation barriers including lack of clear and consistent guidance from the Department of Developmental

Services (DDS) to regional centers and participants, and lack of training for regional center staff.

SB 518 begins to address these barriers by enhancing oversight of the Self-Determination Program by introducing data and reporting measures so California can better track how equitably and effectively Self-Determination is implemented. It includes provisions that would:

- Create an Office of the Ombudsperson for the Self-Determination Program who would help participants overcome barriers to entering the program, and have authority to investigate complaints regarding implementation and identify systemic implementation barriers;
- Require regional centers to train all service coordinators and fair hearing coordinators on Self-Determination, and require such training to be developed with local advisory committees;
- Require regional centers to notify all consumers of Self-Determination at least once per year;
- Add Self-Determination measures to regional centers' performance contracts; and
- Require DDS and regional centers to include Self-Determination data in disparities reporting.

Measures to protect the independence of the Self-Determination Ombudsperson will be critical to building stakeholder trust and ensuring the effectiveness of the position. We look forward to working in collaboration toward those efforts, and toward further clarifying participants' rights under the law.

Self-Determination is based on the principle that people with disabilities know their needs best and are in the best position to plan and manage their own services. SB 518 is an important first step toward strengthening the regional center system's capacity to enact this core principle.

For these reasons, Disability Rights California is pleased to co-sponsor SB 518.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gregory Cramer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gregory Cramer
Senior Legislative Advocate
Disability Rights California

Cc: Honorable Members, Senate Committee on Human Services
Marisa Shea, Principal Consultant, Senate Committee on Human
Services
The Honorable John Laird, California State Senate
Samantha Samuelsen, Office of Senator Laird
Joe Parra, Republican Human Services Committee Consultant
Judy Mark, Disability Voices United