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April 10, 2017

Honorable Nancy Skinner
Chair, Public Safety Committee
California State Senate
Capitol Building, Room 2059
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 142 (BEALL) – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Skinner:

Disability Rights California (DRC), a non-profit advocacy organization that advances and protects the rights of Californians with disabilities, supports SB 142, which reinvests state savings from reduced prison admissions of people with mental illness into community-based treatment. This bill is scheduled for hearing in the Senate Public Safety Committee on April 18, 2017.

Since 2011, California's prison system has undergone significant reforms and changes largely in response to federal lawsuits revealing inadequate medical and mental health care in the prison system.

Ironically, people with mental health disabilities have been the least likely to benefit from the reforms—even though the lawsuits were instigated on their behalf and the Supreme Court affirmed their complaints in 2011. The number of people in California state prisons with a mental health disability has increased in the last five years, both in number and proportion, and is expected to continue to increase in coming years.

SB 142 helps to address this issue while also increasing capacity for community-based mental health treatment. The bill incentivizes the

placement of defendants with mental health disabilities in community-based treatment, rather than state prison, by sharing the savings from reduced prison admissions with counties to reinvest in community-based treatment. Incarcerating people costs more than twice as much as providing community-based residential treatment, yet community treatment yields better results with reductions in arrests and length of incarceration. This reinvestment will create a positive cycle of increased treatment, reduced crime and more savings for even more services.

For these reasons, we support 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 Jim Beall, California State Senate
Carrie Holmes, Policy Consultant, Office of Senator Beall
Honorable Members, Senate Public Safety Committee
Stella Choe, Counsel, Senate Public Safety Committee