



**LEGISLATION AND
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September 9, 2019

Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
Capitol Building, 1st Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 163 (Portantino) – REQUEST FOR SIGNATURE

Dear Governor Newsom:

Disability Rights California (DRC), a non-profit advocacy organization that advances and protects the rights of Californians with disabilities, **supports SB 163 and requests your signature.**

The Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act, requires the State Department of Developmental Services to contract with regional centers to provide services and supports to individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. Existing law defines developmental disability for these purposes to include, among other things, autism.

SB 163 would revise the definition of “behavioral health treatment” to require the services and treatment programs provided to be based on behavioral, developmental, behavior based, or other evidence based models. The bill would remove the exception for health care service plans and health insurance policies in the Medi-Cal program, consistent with the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act.

This is important because many Californians have been diagnosed with autism who are being denied behavioral health treatment. These treatments are crucial for families as they navigate the healthcare system.

This bill would also revise the definition of a qualified autism service professional or paraprofessional. This bill would prevent a health plan and health insurer from denying or reducing medically necessary treatment based on a lack of parent or caregiver participation.

This is important because it would reduce the waiting list for services and allow more people to get assistance. DRC also supports this policy because qualified autism service providers and paraprofessionals have the best experience and knowledge necessary to care properly for individuals who have been diagnosed with autism. Proper behavioral health treatment for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities are essential for the individuals and their families.

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 horizontal stroke at the end.

Eric Harris
Legislative Advocate 2
Disability Rights California

cc: Honorable Anthony Portantino, California State Senate
Tara McGee, Legislative Director, Office of Senator Portantino
Tam Ma, Deputy Legislative Secretary, Office of Legislative Affairs
Sam Miller, Assistant Legislative Deputy, Office of Legislative Affairs