



**LEGISLATION & PUBLIC
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March 29, 2017

Honorable Ed Hernandez
Chair, Health Committee
California State Senate
Capitol Building, Room 2080
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 222 (HERNANDEZ) – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Hernandez:

Disability Rights California, a non-profit advocacy organization that advances and protects the rights of Californians with disabilities, supports SB 222. This bill is scheduled for hearing in the Senate Health Committee on April 5, 2017.

Current law requires counties to suspend Medi-Cal eligibility for individuals who become incarcerated for up to one year from the date of incarceration, or upon release, whichever comes sooner. This current one year limitation, which was enacted in 2013 and is not based on any federal limitation, makes it more difficult for individuals who are incarcerated for longer periods of time to obtain Medi-Cal benefits prior to their release from jail or prison. Individuals who become incarcerated and have their Medi-Cal benefits suspended, then subsequently terminated based on the one year limit, are required to re-apply for benefits in order to restore their Medi-Cal eligibility. Per federal guidance, this one year time limit is not mandated and states are directed to leave individuals in a suspension status until they are no longer eligible for benefits, or upon release, whichever occurs first.

SB 222 requires county human services agencies to suspend Medi-Cal eligibility for incarcerated individuals for an indefinite timeframe, rather than

terminating benefits after one year per the current one year limitation statute. Indefinitely suspending Medi-Cal benefits, as SB 222 would do, ensures that incarcerated individuals have immediate access to benefits that are essential for their basic needs upon release, rather than requiring them to re-apply for benefits and potentially not have access to care immediately. Typically, incarcerated individuals have physical and mental health issues that must be addressed, and ensuring access to health care upon release gives them the opportunity to seek the care they need immediately.

Indefinite benefit suspension streamlines access to coverage and greatly reduces the risks of recidivism as individuals are able to get the critical care that they need. This provides continuity in mental health care, physical treatment and prescription medication between the period of incarceration and reintegration into their community. Ensuring all incarcerated persons return home without gaps in health care improves community safety, protects public health and reduces the likelihood of recidivism by ensuring people with medical care needs have immediate access to critical health supports they need.

For these reasons, Disability Rights California supports 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 "Curtis Child". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Curtis" and last name "Child" clearly distinguishable.

Curtis Child
Legislative Director
Disability Rights California

cc: Honorable Members, Senate Health Committee
Honorable Ed Hernandez, California State Senate
Bao Nguyen, Fellow, Office of Senator Hernandez
John Bauters, Californians for Safety and Justice (Sponsor)
Frank Mecca, County Welfare Directors Association of California
(Sponsor)