June 19, 2019

Honorable Reginald Byron Jones-Sawyer, Sr.
Chair, Public Safety Committee
California State Assembly
Capitol Building, Room 2117
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 282 (Beall) as amended May 17, 2019 – SUPPORT

Dear Assembly Member Jones-Sawyer, Sr.:

Disability Rights California (DRC), a non-profit advocacy organization that advances and protects the rights of Californians with disabilities, supports SB 282. This bill is scheduled for hearing before Assembly Public Safety Committee on June 25, 2019.

Homelessness and incarceration are inherently linked. In fact, people on parole are about 10 times more likely to be homeless than the general public. People on parole also have great difficulties accessing housing, and are seven times more likely to recidivate when homeless than when housed, perpetuating a cycle of incarceration and homelessness, as well as inequities in both our criminal justice and housing systems.

Providing people on parole experiencing homelessness with a stable, affordable place to live that does not limit length of stay, along with services that promote housing stability—the combination known as “supportive housing”—is an evidence-based intervention proven to reduce recidivism. California data reveals supportive housing tenants are able to decrease their days incarcerated by over 60%, and people on parole significantly reduce rates of recidivism in other state supportive housing programs.
The Integrated Services for Mentally Ill Parolees Program (ISMIP), established in the 2007-08 budget, and now funded at over $15 million per year, was intended to support intensive case management and housing for people on parole experiencing homelessness and serious mental illness. Yet, ISMIP is now used to provide primarily mental health treatment, even though ISMIP participants are eligible for Medi-Cal. If participants received Medi-Cal mental health treatment instead, the state would receive 50-90% federal reimbursement for their costs of care, and participants would not experience breaks in treatment. Moreover, an evaluation of ISMIP showed the program has failed to significantly reduce recidivism rates among participants.

Senate Bill 282 will redirect ISMIP funding to the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) to provide county grants for rental assistance and services to offer supportive housing to people on parole experiencing homelessness and serious mental illness. County grantees must agree to provide community-based mental health treatment through Medi-Cal. SB 282 will provide evidence-based approaches to address homelessness over the long-term, while reducing recidivism among this population, all within current State resources.

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.

Very truly yours,

Curtis Child
Legislative Director
Disability Rights California

cc: Honorable Members, Assembly Public Safety Committee
    Nikki Moore, Counsel, Assembly Public Safety Committee
    Honorable Jim Beall, California State Senate
    Tania Dikho, Political Analyst, Office of Senator Beall
    Gary Olson, Consultant, Assembly Republican Caucus Committee