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March 22, 2017

Honorable Anthony Portantino
California State Senate
Capitol Building, Room 3086
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 354 (PORTANTINO) – SPONSOR AND SUPPORT

Dear Senator Portantino:

Disability Rights California, a non-profit advocacy organization that advances and protects the rights of Californians with disabilities, is pleased to sponsor and support SB 354. This bill is scheduled for hearing in the Senate Education Committee on March 29, 2017.

SB 354 requires the local educational agency (LEA) to provide a parent with a copy of the individualized education plan (IEP), any revisions, and certain documents discussed at an IEP team meeting in the native language of the parent, within 30 days of the meeting if requested, or within 30 days of a later request.

Among other provisions, the bill also requires the documents to be translated by a qualified translator and revises the definition of "parent" to specify that it also includes the educational rights holder and the conservator of a child. The bill also requires an LEA to communicate in the native language of the parent, or in another mode of communication used by the parent, during the planning process for the IEP, and to provide alternative communication services, including by providing translation services. SB 354 references the Government Code, Article 9.5 (commencing with Section 11135) of Chapter 1 of Part 1 of Division 3 of Title 2 of the Government Code and its implementing regulations, which

require language access. By way of background, these sections cite LEAs' existing obligations to provide alternative communication services, including translation services. Because educational agencies have an existing state law obligation to provide translation, the required timelines in the bill are a reasonable way for districts to meet this existing obligation.

California is the most diverse state in the nation and our organizational goals include addressing service disparities and ensuring language access for all communities. The IEP, through the identification of individual goals, objectives and services is the cornerstone of ensuring that students with disabilities have access to a free and appropriate education. Additionally, we note that the state's largest school district, Los Angeles Unified, is already obligated to translate 85% of IEPs into the District's most common languages within 30 days under the terms of the Chanda Smith Consent Decree.

SB 354 does much to level the playing field by ensuring that parents whose native language is not English have timely access to a translation of their child's IEP and key documents to allow for meaningful involvement in their child's education. For these reasons, we are proud to sponsor and support this measure.

Please contact me if you have any questions. We thank you for your leadership on this measure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Evelyn M. Abouhassan".

Evelyn Abouhassan
Senior Legislative Advocate
Disability Rights California

cc: Kristi G. Lopez, MSW, District Representative, Office of Senator Portantino
Anahit Sargsyan, Legislative Aide, Office of Senator Portantino
Honorable Chair and Members, Senate Education Committee
Lynn Lorber, Chief Consultant, Senate Education Committee