



**LEGISLATION & PUBLIC  
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August 22, 2017

Honorable Lorena Gonzalez Fletcher  
Chair, Appropriations Committee  
California State Assembly  
Capitol Building, Room 2114  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 8 (BEALL) – SUPPORT**

Dear Assembly Member Gonzalez Fletcher:

Disability Rights California (DRC), a non-profit advocacy organization that advances and protects the rights of Californians with disabilities, supports SB 8. This bill is scheduled for hearing in the Assembly Appropriations Committee on August 23, 2017.

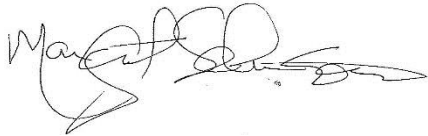
Existing law authorizes a court to postpone prosecution of a misdemeanor and place the defendant in a pretrial diversion program if the defendant has had sexual trauma, a traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse, or mental health disabilities due to military service.

This bill would authorize a court to postpone prosecution of a misdemeanor or a felony punishable in a county jail and place a defendant in a pretrial diversion program as long as the defendant agrees. The court would make the placement if satisfied the defendant has a mental health disability and the disability played a significant role in the commission of the charged offense, and the defendant would benefit from mental health treatment. The bill would require the arrest, upon successful completion of the diversion program, to be deemed never to have occurred with certain exceptions.

Expanding voluntary treatment-based diversion programs for defendants with mental health disabilities will lead to better outcomes. Defendants will be less likely to reoffend and will get the treatment they need rather than incarceration.

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, Assembly Appropriations Committee  
Pedro Reyes, Chief Consultant, Assembly Appropriations Committee