



**LEGISLATION & PUBLIC
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June 19, 2017

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

RE: SB 8 (BEALL) – 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 8. This bill is scheduled for hearing in the Assembly Public Safety Committee on June 27, 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.

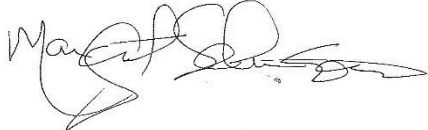
This bill would authorize a court to postpone prosecution of a misdemeanor or a felony punishable in a county jail and place a defendant in a pretrial diversion program as long as the defendant agrees. The court would make the placement if satisfied the defendant has a mental health disability and the 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 long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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 Public Safety Committee
David Billingsley, Counsel, Assembly Public Safety Committee