



**LEGISLATION & PUBLIC
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March 7, 2018

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

RE: SB 906 (BEALL) – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Hernandez:

Disability Rights California (DRC), a non-profit advocacy organization that advances and protects the rights of Californians with disabilities, **supports SB 906**. This bill is set for hearing in the Senate Health Committee on March 14, 2018.

SB 906 establishes a statewide peer, parent, transition age, and family support specialist certification program as part of the state's mental health delivery system. DRC operates, as part of its ongoing programs, a peer self-advocacy program (PSA) and it is from that experience in which our support for SB 906 is grounded.

The DRC PSA and other peer support services are integral to fulfilling the goals of the Mental Health Services Act to ensure mental health services are provided based on a recovery model perspective and approach. Peer Certification recognizes the important work peers perform utilizing evidence-based practice. Certifying peer support positions reduces stigma and discrimination in the workplace and in society. The PSA experience builds trust and confidence among peers receiving services that other professionals cannot offer. PSA provides clients with a shared narrative, a lived experience of hospitalization and having lost independence and

rights. Peers know what it is like to take medications, see therapists and psychiatrists, be held involuntarily, placed on Lanterman-Petris-Short (LPS) conservatorship, etc. Often clients need to know someone else has gone through the same challenges and successfully gained their own wellness and recovery. Peers can share their mental health disability or specific experience. PSA staff can *almost always* relate it back to their own lives and experiences of trauma, providing trauma-informed services.

DRC has found that peer support creates a relationship that fosters personal responsibility and self-determination. California is one of the very few states that does not have a peer specialist and training program. Now is the time for California to embrace peer support as an evidence-based model to improve outcomes for individuals with behavioral disabilities and maximize federal Medicaid funds.

For these reasons, DRC strongly 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,

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 Jim Beall, California State Senate
Gregory Cramer, Consultant, Office of Senator Beall
Honorable Joel Anderson, California State Senate
Honorable Members, Senate Health Committee
Reyes Diaz, Principal Consultant, Senate Health Committee
Adrienne Shilton, Steinberg Institute