August 9, 2010

The Honorable Christine Kehoe
Senate Appropriations Committee
Capitol Building, Room 2206
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Removal of AB 2204 (Beall) from Suspense

Dear Senator Kehoe:

California’s DD Network Partners is a collaboration of the 5 organizations in California authorized by federal legislation (the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act) and funded by the Administration on Developmental Disabilities: the State Council on Developmental Disabilities, Disability Rights California, and 3 University Centers for Excellence in DD Research Education and Service (the USC UCEDD at Children's Hospital LA, the Tarjan Center at UCLA, and the CEDD at UC Davis MIND Institute). Each entity engages in a diverse set of activities to promote the intent of Congress to assure the full integration, inclusion, independence, and productivity of individuals with developmental disabilities in the community life of their choice. In addition, we work together to leverage our individual activities to benefit Californians with developmental disabilities on important matters. One of our joint priorities is ensuring that California’s service system reflects the needs of consumers and families from diverse ethnic and language backgrounds.

We write this letter to urge the Appropriations Committee to remove AB 2204 from Suspense when it reconsiders this issue. We support AB 2204’s requirement that DDS engage in “best effort” activities to include groups that collectively reflect the state’s diverse population when convening stakeholders, as an initial, but important step to ensure that underrepresented populations, who may be disproportionately affected by decisions made, have a place at the table when issues are discussed.

Our DD Network Partners has been concerned that individuals with DD from racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse communities (approximately 60% of regional center clients) are receiving fewer purchase of service dollars than their mainstream counterparts with similar needs. We are disturbed that AB 2204 was
placed on Suspense because of the determination that this activity to
ensure representation by under-represented groups at stakeholder
workgroups could potentially increase spending by these groups, even
though the same analysis found assuring members of stakeholder groups
represent the diversity of California would be “minor and affordable” in cost.
Keeping this bill in Suspense would essentially send the message that the
voice of California citizens with DD from under-represented groups should
be kept silent.

We strongly urge the Appropriations Committee to reconsider its decision,
and remove this bill from Suspense.

Sincerely,

Catherine Blakemore, Executive
Director
Disability Rights CA

Robert A. Jacobs, M.D., MPH, Director
USC UCEDD at Childrens Hospital Los
Angeles

Robin Hansen, M.D., Director
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Olivia Raynor, Ph.D., Director
Tarjan Center, UCLA

Marcia Good, Chair
State Council on Developmental Disabilities

cc: Honorable Members of the Senate Appropriations Committee
cc: Honorable Jim Beall, California State Assembly
cc: Bob Franzoia, Staff Director, Senate Appropriations Committee
cc: Katie Johnson, Consultant, Senate Appropriations Committee
cc: Eric Gelber, Chief Consultant, Assembly Member Beall’s Office