March 11, 2009

Assemblymember Jim Beall, Jr., Chair
Assembly Committee on Human Services
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249

Subject: AB 302 (Beall) – SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Beall:

The USC UCEDD at Children's Hospital Los Angeles, is one of 67 University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Research, Education, and Service nationwide authorized under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance of Bill of Rights Act (DD Act). As such, the common goal of the network is to engage in activities which will promote the promises of the DD Act within the states where we are located. In California, the Lanterman Act carries additional promises to comprehensive services across the lifespan for those who meet the state definition of DD. Because California has the most ethnically and linguistically diverse population in the nation, our UCEDD is especially interested in assuring that individuals who qualify for regional center services have access to the services they need, regardless of race, culture, or language spoken. Hence, we strongly support AB 302 which requires the posting of POS services and expenditure data by ethnicity on a regular basis by regional center.

Our UCEDD is aware of the long-time debate around racial disparities in POS services and expenditures since the original study, which identified racial disparities in POS services and expenditures by DDS staff person, Dr. Beverly Lozana, who at that time was assigned to the DDS Multi-Cultural Committee. Research in many fields over the past 10-15 years, has documented racial disparities in access to services and service outcomes in health care, mental health, education, foster care, childcare, and corrections, to name but a few. While there are differences across ethnic groups, there is solid evidence that people of color receive fewer services and have poorer outcomes than their white counterparts, regardless of the service system. Harrington and Kang’s most recent comprehensive study documented similar patterns of racial disparities in DDS POS services and expenditures, as cited in your bill.

AB 302 proposes to make existing data on purchase of service expenditures public, which is an important first step towards addressing these disparities. Respecting the local autonomy of regional centers, this particular action creates a transparency, which allows needed discussions to occur.

We sincerely appreciate your efforts to address these problems of equity in the DD system.

Respectfully yours,

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