



**LEGISLATION & PUBLIC
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August 24, 2018

Honorable Jim Beall
California State Senate
Capitol Building, Room 2082
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 215 (BEALL) as amended August 23, 2018 – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Beall:

Disability Rights California (DRC), a non-profit advocacy organization that advances and protects the rights of Californians with disabilities, **supports SB 215**. This bill amends current law to help counties and communities implement mental health diversion created by AB 1810.

There is an urgent need for specific and targeted efforts to reduce the rates of incarceration of people with mental illness, and to facilitate successful diversion and reentry. The current situation is dire. Jails are not therapeutic environments. They are not designed to be mental health treatment centers. Prisoners with mental illness are significantly more likely than those without mental illness to be abused. They are more likely to commit suicide, the leading cause of death in jails. Further, it costs significantly more to incarcerate prisoners with mental illness than prisoners without this condition. The over-incarceration of people with mental illness is directly at odds with California's stated commitment to providing treatment in the least restrictive manner appropriate, with respect for the right to "dignity, privacy, and humane care."

AB 1810 is an important step toward recognizing that the population of inmates suffering from a mental disorder is growing and provides opportunities for the courts and communities to begin providing effective

alternatives for treatment other than the woefully non-therapeutic environment in jails. DRC strongly supports that legislation. The amendments to AB 1810 contained in SB 215 should serve to encourage counties and communities to implement and expand mental health diversion programs. For that reason, DRC supports SB 215 as well.

We appreciate your continued leadership on this important issue. 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: Gregory Cramer, Policy Consultant, Office of Senator Beall
Stella Choe, Counsel, Senate Public Safety Committee
David Billingsley, Counsel, Assembly Public Safety Committee
Gary Olson, Consultant, Assembly Republican Caucus