

September 18, 2024

The Honorable Governor Gavin Newsom
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 1147 (Addis) – Disability, Equity, Transparency, and
Accountability Act –SUPPORT**

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF), I write to urge you to sign AB 1147 (Addis), the Disability, Equity, Transparency, and Accountability Act.

DREDF is a nonprofit disability civil rights law and policy organization dedicated to protecting and advancing the civil and human rights of people with disabilities. Founded in 1979 by people with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities, DREDF remains board- and staff-led by members of the communities for whom we advocate. DREDF pursues its mission through education, advocacy, and law reform efforts, and is recognized for its expertise in the interpretation of state and federal disability civil rights laws. For more than three decades, DREDF has received funding from the California Legal Services Trust Fund (IOLTA) Program as a Support Center providing consultation, information, training, and representation services to legal services offices throughout the state on disability rights issues.

As a Support Center, DREDF frequently uses the Public Records Act (Gov. Code, § 7920.000 et seq.) to investigate and enforce the rights of our indigent disabled constituents to fair and nondiscriminatory treatment by their government. Low-income people with disabilities – including people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) – must interact with their state and local governments to access needed services and support. Access to records through the PRA is an essential tool for holding these governments accountable and responsive to our needs, preferences, and aspirations.

Assembly Bill 1147 makes Regional Centers subject to the PRA effective January 1, 2026. It is surprising that they are not already. Regional Centers are governed by state law and perform governmental functions using exclusively public funds. This year, Regional Centers will spend almost \$15 billion of state and federal funds to provide services to nearly 500,000 Californians with I/DD.

The PRA protects the constitutional right of Californians to access information about the people's business. (Cal. Const., art. I, § 3, subd. (b)(2).) Through the PRA, organizations like ours can access public records and review them to determine whether state and local programs are truly acting in the interest of the public they serve, or if they are engaging in discriminatory practices, misuse of funds, or other actions or inactions that threaten the wellbeing of the community. This access is critically needed

for Regional Centers. Like public school districts (which are of course covered by the PRA along with charter schools), Regional Centers are the only game in town for people with I/DD and their families.

Amending the PRA to cover Regional Centers will promote much needed transparency, accountability and greater trust in our system of I/DD services and will support the implementation of the Master Plan for developmental disability services.

DREDF supports AB1147 and respectfully requests your signature on this long overdue legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Claudia Center". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Claudia Center
Legal Director