



California Association for the Retarded

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June 22, 2007

The Honorable Elaine Alquist, Chair
Senate Human Services Committee
State Capitol, Room 5080
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: OPPOSE AB1427 (Krekorian)

Dear Senator Alquist:

The California Association for the Retarded is a state-wide organization that recognizes a wide range of disabilities among persons with mental retardation and advocates for their right to choose from a full spectrum of services to meet their identified needs. We firmly **oppose AB1427** which would create a pilot program in six regional center areas to study the link between higher wages and better training to lower staff turnover and better services – an obvious outcome that no one disputes.

Higher wages and better training are worthy goals, but the state does not need and cannot afford a study to prove the obvious. The proposal is contrary to consumers' right to individualized services and marginalizes consumers who choose services not on a pilot-approved program list of better-paid and -trained staff. Further, the proposed pilot would provide 200 hours of training time (10% of a full-time worker's annual hours) with nothing to suggest that such a level of training can be achieved, or that meaningful outcomes would be attained for consumers. The bill purposely leaves out Work Activity Programs (WAPs), a service choice that continues to serve multiple identified needs. Such a proven service choice should not be dismissed, along with the aspirations of those who choose it.

Further, if there are not funds allocated to the pilots, a regional center can use existing purchase of service funds – thereby discriminating against the interests of those who choose WAPs and diverting funds from services that have been starved for money over the past several budget cycles.

This proposal does nothing to alleviate the chronic problem of inadequate funding of services for people with mental retardation. We strongly urge your vote in opposition to AB1427. Should you share our vision of the true needs this population lives with, consider providing increased funding for all services for persons with mental retardation – not just the hand picked services targeted by AB1427 – and support true choice from among all services funded for success.

Sincerely,

Marion Lieberman
President