From: Marty Omoto
To: CDCANreportlist01@rcip.com;
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CDCAN REPORT
CALIFORNIA DISABILITY COMMUNITY ACTION NETWORK
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California Disability Community Action Network Disability Rights News goes out to over 45,000 people with disabilities, mental health needs, seniors, veterans with disabilities and mental health needs, their families, workers, community organizations, including those in Asian/Pacific Islander, Latino, African American communities, policy makers and others across California.
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California Legislature

Senate President Steinberg Announces New Senate Select Committee on Autism & Related Disorders

SACRAMENTO, CALIF (CDCAN) [Updated 04/28/09 10:30 PM (Pacific Time) - Senate President Darrell Steinberg (Democrat – Sacramento) announced today (April 28) a new Senate Select Committee on Autism and Related Disorders that he said would build on the work of the California Legislative Blue Ribbon Commission on Autism, which expired last November 2008.

Steinberg, who chaired that commission during its three year existence, also announced a package of bills, introduced earlier this year, dealing with autism spectrum disorders.

"This select committee signals California's ongoing bipartisan commitment to individuals with autism and their families," Steinberg said. "It will provide a legislative forum for research, analysis, deliberations, and outreach on the most pressing issues and concerns facing families who are dealing with ASD [autism spectrum disorders]."

Steinberg, who will chair the select committee, said that the panel will focus on issues related to establishing "appropriate health insurance coverage; early identification and treatment; and promoting appropriate employment and housing for individuals" with autism spectrum disorders.

The Select Committee, according to Steinberg, will soon establish a series of Task Forces and Working Groups that will work with persons with developmental disabilities,

advocates and leaders throughout the state to deal with the growing numbers of people with autism that nearly every state official and advocate say has reached "epidemic proportions".

The Select Committee will face a daunting task with California facing a growing budget shortfall of over $8 billion that could swell to over $14 to $18 billion by late May. The Governor is expected to submit proposals in late May that will call for major new spending cuts to health and human services that the Legislature will need to act on before July 1, 2009.

Autism Called "Epidemic"
About 1 in 150 children are affected by autism spectrum disorders and the federal Centers on Disease Control considers autism a national public health crisis and has called it an "epidemic".

Once considered rare, autism is the fastest growing serious developmental disability and is more prevalent than juvenile diabetes, childhood cancer and pediatric AIDS combined.

Nationally, the diagnosis of autism has increased tenfold in the last decade.

Members of Select Committee
Members of the Senate Select Committee on Autism and Related Disorders appointed by Steinberg are:

- Senate President Darrell Steinberg (Democrat – Sacramento, 6th District) – Chair
- Senate Republican Leader Dennis Hollingsworth (Republican – Murrieta, 36th District)
- Sen. Elaine Alquist (Democrat – Santa Clara, 13th District), chair of the Senate Health Committee
- Sen. Roy Ashburn (Republican – Bakersfield, 18th District)
- Sen. Lou Correa (Democrat – Santa Ana, 34th District)
- Sen. Dean Florez (Democrat – Shafter, 16th District)
- Sen. Carol Liu (Democrat – Pasadena, 21st District), chair of the Senate Human Services Committee
- Sen. Alex Padilla (Democrat – Pacoima, 20th District)
- Sen. Fran Pavley (Democat – Agoura Hills, 23rd District)
- Sen. Lois Wolk (Democrat – Davis, 5th District)

Several Senators and Advocates At Press Conference
At the press conference announcing the formation of the select committee, six of the committee members (Alquist, Ashburn, Correa, Florez, Liu, and Padilla) were present along with Steinberg.

Also part of the press conference was Feda Almaliti, parent of a 4 year son, Mohammad, with autism and co-founder of "Autism Deserves Equal Coverage" and Rick Rollens, father of a young adult son with autism and one of the co-founders of the Sacramento based MIND Institute. Chuck Gardner, parent of a 17 year old son with autism and also a co-founder of the MIND Institute was scheduled to also be present but was not able to attend.

Select Committee Created For Several Important Reasons

Steinberg said that the select committee, which has no jurisdiction over bills, created the panel for the following reasons:

- Address the autism epidemic
- Continue the findings and recommendations of the California Legislative Blue Ribbon Commission on Autism.
- Promote policies and legislation to "better assist individuals and families" who are dealing with autism spectrum disorders
- Provide a legislative forum for research, analysis, deliberations and outreach
- "Deal with the fiscal challenges" that confront the State in providing "necessary and crucial services"

Focus of Select Committee This Year

Steinberg said that the select committee will focus on three specific issues this year:

1. INSURANCE COVERAGE BY PRIVATE HEALTH PLANS

- Previous legislation last year (SB 1563 by Sens. Don Perata and Steinberg) was vetoed by the Governor, who indicated however that an administrative solution might be possible.
- The issue of insurance coverage is covered under mental health parity and is also an issue of "equity and fairness" Steinberg said.
- The select committee will work with the Schwarzenegger Administration to implement a possible administrative solution.

2. PROMOTE TRANSITIONAL EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING

- Only 9% of persons with autism spectrum disorders live independently
- 84% of persons with autism spectrum disorders in California are younger than 22 years.
- California spends, though the 21 non-profit regional centers, for adults with autism spectrum disorders is $37,000 per year – dramatically higher than children with autism spectrum disorders, who have an average cost of $9,800 per year.
- Unemployment of adults with developmental disabilities who are eligible for regional center funded services is at 84%/
- California ranks 34th in the employment of persons with disabilities.

3. EARLY IDENTIFICATION AND INTERVENTION

- Lifelong care can be reduced, according to Steinberg, by 2/3rds with early diagnosis and intervention, which results in a cost savings to the State.

Package of Autism Related Senate Bills Highlighted

Though not part of the specific work or jurisdiction of the Senate Select Committee on Autism and Related Disorders, the Senate members present at the press conference highlighted a package of autism related bills introduced earlier this year: [*CDCAN Note: see separate CDCAN Report on Wednesday with status report on all autism related bills including those introduced in the Assembly that deal with special education due process hearings sometimes referred to as "stay put" and other bills*]

SB 383 – AUTISM PILOT PROGRAM: SCREENING
AUTHOR: Sen. Carol Liu
SUMMARY OF BILL:
Would require the Department of Developmental Services to partner with one or more regional centers to implement a two-year pilot program to screen toddlers for autism spectrum disorder in at least 3 key geographic areas around the state.
SEN. LIU'S COMMENTS ON HER BILL:
"If we can identify child with autism at an early age and intervene in the right ways, we can achieve better lifetime results and outcomes for California's children."

SB 682 – CAREER TECHNICAL EDUCATION OPTIONS PILOT PROGRAM
AUTHOR: Sen.Alex Padilla
SUMMARY OF BILL:
Would authorize county offices of education to create pilot programs that offer Career Technical Education options to individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder and other disabilities or special needs.
SEN. PADILLA'S COMMENTS ON HIS BILL:
"In the next few years, a significant number of young people with autism will enter adulthood and transition into the community. The state urgently needs to expand Career Technical Education opportunities for Californians with autism. SB 682 will help individuals with autism and other special needs become self-sufficient members of society."

SB 812 – HOUSING NEEDS – ADULTS WITH AUTISM
AUTHOR: Sen. Roy Ashburn
SUMMARY OF BILL:
Would require the state and local housing plans to identify and analyze the specific housing needs of adults with autism spectrum disorders in cooperation with stakeholders. Would commission a study on the housing needs of people with autism spectrum disorders who receive services under the Department of Developmental

Services.
SEN. ASHBURN'S COMMENTS ON HIS BILL:
"Within the next decade, California will face a wave of youths with ASD who are transitioning into adulthood, and who will have specific housing needs. SB 812 will help ensure that we accurately evaluate and meet the housing needs of this influx of young adults within our communities, enabling them to live healthy and productive lives."

SB 621 – SPECIAL EDUCATION: CAREER TECHNICAL EDUCATION
AUTHOR: Sen. Dean Florez
SUMMARY OF BILL:
Would ensure that Career Technical Education curriculum in California includes materials for special education students-including those with autism.
SEN. FLOREZ'S COMMENTS ON HIS BILL:
"Career Technical Education is an important program that provides students with skills to enter and succeed in the job market. SB 621 ensures we do not close the door of opportunity on autistic students by ensuring they are included in our school's Career Technical Education programs."

URGENT!!!!

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MANY, MANY THANKS to HOPE SERVICES in San Jose, FEAT of Sacramento (Families for Early Autism Treatment), RESCoalition, Easter Seals of Southern California, Tri-Counties Regional Center, Westside Regional Center, Regional Center of the East Bay, Friends of Children with Special Needs, UCP of Orange County, UCP of Los Angeles and Ventura Counties, Alta California Regional Center, Life Steps, Parents Helping Parents, Work Training, Foothill Autism Alliance, Arc Contra Costa, Pause4Kids, Manteca CAPS, Training Toward Self Reliance, UCP, California NAELA, Californians for Disability Rights, Inc (CDR) including CDR chapters, CHANCE Inc, , Strategies To Empower People (STEP), Harbor Regional Center, Asian American parents groups, Resources for Independent Living and many other Independent Living Centers, several regional centers, People First chapters, IHSS workers, other self advocacy and family support groups, developmental center

families, adoption assistance program families and children, and others across California