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April 11, 2017

The Honorable Ben Allen
Chair, Senate Education Committee
State Capitol, Room 2083
Sacramento, California 95814

By electronic mail

**RE: SB 354 (Portantino) – SUPPORT AS AMENDED
MARCH 20, 2017**

Dear Senator Allen:

Public Advocates supports SB 354 (Portantino), requiring local educational agencies (LEAs) to provide parents with a copy of their children’s individual educational plan (IEP) in the native language of the parents within 30 days of the IEP meeting, if requested, or within 30 days of a later request. SB 354 also revises the definition of a parent to include the educational rights holder and the conservator of a child.

Public Advocates is a civil rights legal organization that is committed to reversing inequities and ensuring meaningful access to opportunity for groups most affected by systemic injustices. Our commitment to “making rights real” shapes our vision of building an educational system that prepares all students for college and career readiness. At the forefront of this work are community-wide efforts to identify and challenge barriers to equal opportunities for learning.

Parents play a vital role in their children’s ability to succeed and reach their full potential. California is working to address historical inequities in its new accountability school system which focuses on closing performance and opportunity differences among all student groups including students with disabilities.

The IEP is the is the mechanism to set annual goals and determine services and accommodations for students with disabilities to help them receive a free and appropriate education (FAPE) required by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The IEP process includes parents as equal IEP team members. When parents receive IEP and other planning documents well after the school staff has made critical decisions, these rights are undermined. SB 354 requires an LEA to communicate in the native language of the parent, or in another mode of communication used by the parent, during the planning process for

the IEP, and to provide alternative communications services, including by providing translation services. SB 354 will help to bring equity and transparency to the IEP process by ensuring that parents whose native language is not English will have timely access to a translation of their children's IEP and key documents. Meaningful communication with parents to promote parental participation in programs for their children's education is a priority. Cal. Educ. Code Sec. 52064(d)(3).

For these reasons, we support SB 354. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about our position.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Liz Guillen".

Liz Guillen
Director of Legislative & Community Affairs
(916) 803-5596 – cell

Cc: Senate Education Committee
Senator Anthony Portantino