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The Senate Select Committee on Autism & Related Disorders Informational Hearing (April 13, 2010)

Preliminary Autism Taskforce Recommendations Related to the **Appropriate & Affordable Housing** for Individuals with Autism Spectrum & Related Disorders

Overarching Problems & Challenges:

1. Lack of Information and Data:

There is insufficient information about the housing needs and preferences of individuals with ASD and other developmental disabilities. Over 75% of Regional Center consumers are currently living in the home of a family member or legal guardian. It is imperative that the State develop a strategic approach to the anticipated tremendous increase in support services, as the “tsunami” of youths and young adults will “age out” into community placement. Current estimates suggest that over 30,000 regional center consumers are in need of community housing placements. However, these reports are based on “guesstimates” and approximations. Data is needed to define the future housing needs of this population. Therefore, the Statewide Coordinating Council of Autism Taskforces recommends exploring the following:

- a. Use existing resources to begin obtaining appropriate information and establish a statewide data base with regards to the “housing choices” of regional center consumers.
- b. Consider a statewide questionnaire of regional center clients that would provide appropriate and important data with regards to housing issues of this population. Although “housing” (i.e. the bricks and mortars) is not a direct responsibility that is defined by the Lanterman Act, the support services that are funded by the regional centers are directly impacted by the community placement of the consumers.
- c. Include “housing choices” as a required component of the regional center’s IPP process beginning no later than when

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the consumer is 16 years of age. At this age, schools are required to begin an “Individual Transition Plan” as part of the students’ IEP. Planning for community housing should therefore be included as part of this process.

- d. Improve the information on housing related issues that is provided to consumers, and their families, through the IEP and IPP process. Consumers and families should be better informed on the appropriate housing models and community placement supports that may be needed. Regional centers and school districts should explore obtaining these resources by means of public-private partnerships such as developers and builders who are interested in developing communities that include affordable housing models.
 - e. Convene a “Housing Summit.” There is widespread agreement on the importance of housing issues. However, there are unique problems, challenges and opportunities that have been identified locally and regionally throughout the State. Therefore, DDS should consider convening a group of housing experts to explore innovative strategies.
2. Lack Of Adequate Funds And Resources For Affordable Housing
 - a. Explore whether pretax college “529 accounts” could be modified so as to provide housing and/or supports for individuals with ASD and other developmental disabilities
 - b. Redirect existing sources of funding. At the present time, redevelopment agencies already have a 20% “set-aside” for affordable housing. However, in some cases these funds are underutilized. Therefore, it is recommended that a portion of these resources be specifically directed to individuals with “Extremely Low Income (ELI) Classification” since most individuals with ASD would be classified within this group.
3. Lack of Adequate Incentives for Developers and Builders
 - a. Develop strategies that provide incentive and reduce the “red-tape” (and therefore the time from planning to completion of the project) for those developers and builders that are providing housing for individuals with ASD

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- b. Provide appropriate waivers and flexibility to builders and developers that are providing multi-family housing units for individuals with ASD and other disabilities
- c. Consider reducing and/or waiving certain “development fees” for those projects that specifically address the housing needs of individuals with ASD and other disabilities
- d. Provide incentives for appropriate housing models that best serve the housing needs of individuals with disabilities. These rewards could include possible “bonus points” for competitive awarding of state bonds and state-sponsored development/building projects
- e. Explore the establishment of affordable housing tax credits for developers and builders that provide appropriate and affordable housing for individuals with ASD and other disabilities
- f. Provide acknowledgment and recognition by the State and local government to those builders and developers that provide appropriate and affordable housing for individuals with ASD and other disabilities
- g. Explore whether “Section 8 Housing” could be expanded to include and provide resources for individuals with developmental disabilities

4. Lack of Stable Housing for Regional Center Consumers

- a. Explore opportunities that would enable parents, families, and other stakeholders to donate their home and other properties in order to subsidize a stable home environment for regional center consumers.
- b. Modify existing Proposition 13 rules to enable parents to bequeath a residential property to their immediate family member who is a regional center consumer.
- c. Create tax credits and appropriate tax waivers for parents who bequeath their home to their immediate family member who is a regional center consumer.
- d. Explore strategies to implement the intent of SB 1175 (Steinberg) that enables regional centers to partner with non-profit foundations in order to improve affordable housing choices for regional center consumers.