November 6, 2010

Tamera Leighton
for Colin Buchanan
1225 Marshall Street, Suite 8
Crescent City, California 95531

Honorable Carol Liu
Chair, Senate Human Services Committee
1020 N Street, Room 521
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Regional Center Services

Dear Assembly Member Liu,

I am the parent of a 16-year old child, Colin Buchanan, who has autistic disorder and epilepsy, and who receives supports and services provided by Redwood Coast Regional Center.

Services provided by Redwood Coast Regional Center have been a necessary part of our lives since my child was diagnosed with autistic disorder at age 2. The Regional Center has always been a strong partner in helping me advocate for educational and community inclusion, and my autistic and non-verbal child was successfully included until the age of 16 – just this summer. I'm overwhelmingly proud of Colin's accomplishments. He's a reader and a typist and uses these skills and a voice output device to communicate. He was fully included in his neighborhood school, in local outdoor day camps, in Little League, in Boys & Girls Club activities and more throughout his life. My child has friends and has had as happy a childhood as he could manage, given the impact of his nonverbal autism.

I learned long ago that without the help of the regional center, I would have been crushed by the burdens of raising such a complicated child, and I learned this once again this summer when I found Colin in a state of crisis that could not have been anticipated. It seems that adolescence moved in and consumed Colin, leaving me

with visits by the police because they were concerned that my child (5' 10" / 190 lbs), my neighbors and I were not safe. The unfortunate fact was that we were not safe. Only with regional center assistance were we able to find a way for Colin and me to be safe, and for Colin to receive the help he needs to learn to cope with his anger and frustration ... and size. It is regional center service coordination and provided services that are keeping us safe during this precarious time of adolescence, seizures and autism.

Please support the regional center system and the Lanterman Act. Without the regional center's commitment and caring service coordination, people like me, no matter how hard we work, will be crushed by the impacts of disability.

Sincerely,

Tamera Leighton
for Colin Buchanan

cc: Redwood Coast Regional Center and Association of Regional Center Agencies