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ACR-60 Education: students with disabilities. (2015-2016)

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Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 60

CHAPTER 116

Relative to education.

[Filed with Secretary of State July 21, 2015.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 60, Santiago. Education: students with disabilities.

This measure would recognize the necessity of a more respectful and humanistic view of students with disabilities, and would affirm that state policies and procedures should use People First Language to the greatest extent possible.

Fiscal Committee: no

WHEREAS, All students deserve to be treated with dignity and respect; and

WHEREAS, More than 700,000 students with disabilities receive special education services in California, comprising more than 10 percent of the state's public school enrollment; and

WHEREAS, Students with disabilities are sons, daughters, sisters, brothers, friends, and neighbors; and

WHEREAS, The contributions of students with disabilities enrich our communities as they live, learn, and share their lives; and

WHEREAS, The language used to refer to students with disabilities has a profound impact in shaping beliefs and attitudes about these students, driving policies and laws, influencing our feelings and decisions, and affecting students' daily lives; and

WHEREAS, Old, inaccurate, and inappropriate descriptors about students with disabilities perpetuate negative stereotypes and attitudinal barriers; and

WHEREAS, When we identify or describe students with disabilities primarily in terms of their disability or medical diagnosis, we undervalue and stigmatize them; and

WHEREAS, Using thoughtful terminology can foster positive attitudes about students with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, One of the major improvements in communicating verbally or in writing with or about students with disabilities is People First Language, which places the person ahead of his or her disability; and

WHEREAS, People First Language is an objective form of communication that eliminates generalizations and stereotypes by focusing on the person rather than the disability; and

WHEREAS, For example, we do not refer to a child with cancer as a “cancerous child,” and similarly, we should not refer to a child with autism as an “autistic child” or a child with epilepsy as “an epileptic child”; and

WHEREAS, A recent report of California’s Statewide Task Force on Special Education entitled, “One System: Reforming Education to Serve All Students,” called for a unified, inclusive educational system that supports all students based on individual needs; and

WHEREAS, The manner in which written and verbal policies and communications refer to students with disabilities can further this important state educational goal; and

WHEREAS, The California Legislature recognizes the necessity of a more respectful and humanistic view of students with disabilities; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That the Legislature affirms that state policies and procedures should use People First Language to the greatest extent possible, especially those used by state and local educational agencies; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.