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SR-90 (2023-2024)

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ENROLLED MAY 03, 2024

PASSED IN SENATE MAY 02, 2024

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE— 2023–2024 REGULAR SESSION

SENATE RESOLUTION

NO. 90

Introduced by Senator Rubio

(Coauthors: Senators Allen, Alvarado-Gil, Archuleta, Atkins, Caballero, Cortese, Dodd, Durazo, Hurtado, Limón, Nguyen, Niello, Portantino, Umberg, Wahab, Wiener, and Wilk)

April 16, 2024

Relative to Neurodiversity Awareness Month.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SR 90, Rubio.

WHEREAS, The term “neurodiversity” was originated by Judy Singer, an Australian sociologist, to promote equality and inclusion for neurological minorities; and

WHEREAS, The neurodiversity movement is primarily a social justice movement, and is increasingly important for clinicians in neurodiversity research and education as they view and address certain disabilities and neurological conditions; and

WHEREAS, According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, neurodiversity represents the idea that people experience the world in different ways, with no single right way of thinking, learning, and behaving, and that these differences are not deficits. Neurodiversity refers to the diversity of all people and is often used in the context of autism spectrum disorder and other neurological or developmental disorders such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or dyslexia; and

WHEREAS, The Federal Centers for Disease Control Prevention has estimated that 1 in 54 children by eight years of age have characteristics within the autism spectrum and rates of diagnosis have dramatically increased by more than 600 percent in the last decades. Many cases of autism and ADHD may be undiagnosed due to cultural or socioeconomic factors, which may include stigma and the cost of diagnosis; and

WHEREAS, Across the nation and throughout California's schools, about 25 percent of children and youth in every classroom have some type of neurodiverse learning need, including dyslexia, dyscalculia, ADHD, anxiety disorder, autism spectrum disorder, executive function issues, trauma, and others; and

WHEREAS, These numbers are expected to increase over time, based on historical trends and the expansion of the neurodivergence spectrum; and

WHEREAS, Although some students may have an official disability accommodation related to a neurodivergent condition, it is essential that educators be aware of how to identify and create inclusive learning environments outside of formal accommodations for students. Moreover, not all neurodivergent students will have an official diagnosis or be enrolled with disability student services. In a 2013 study of over 17,000 children in the United States, Black children were 69 percent less likely, and Latinx children were 50 percent less likely, to receive an ADHD diagnosis than their White counterparts. Similarly, girls are underdiagnosed with autism and often must exhibit more behavioral problems or significant intellectual disability to receive an official diagnosis as compared to boys; and

WHEREAS, It is of utmost importance that schools protect all their students by promoting safe and supportive environments. Teachers can support this goal in several ways: fostering a psychologically safe environment using active listening techniques; providing multiple ways of learning with the use of online, visual, and hands-on methods; recognizing the strengths and talents of each student and playing into those strengths; encouraging options for parental engagement, which can benefit all involved; and creating routines so students are better positioned to devote their attention to the learning activity; and

WHEREAS, According to a study by the Kennedy Krieger Institute and Johns Hopkins University, out of 1,200 parents who had a child on the autism spectrum disorder, 63 percent of the children had been bullied. The researchers also found these children were three times more likely to be bullied than their neurotypical peers; and

WHEREAS, According to Joseph Heilner of ABA Centers of America, in order to prevent future occurrences related to neurodivergence and bullying, we need to raise awareness about conditions and establish more inclusive environments where all children are included and respected; and

WHEREAS, Antibullying policies and raising awareness can be applied to the neurodivergence community to create a more inclusive education environment; and

WHEREAS, After high school, college represents another challenging experience for many neurodivergent students, as less than one-half of autistic young adults pursue a college degree and many of those do not complete their degree. The challenges faced by neurodivergent college students are not solely academic and include discrimination by other students, misunderstandings on the part of instructors, overstimulation at social events, and difficulty transitioning from high school into college and from college into the workforce; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, That the Senate hereby proclaims April to be Neurodiversity Awareness Month during which every Californian is encouraged to promote, understand, and accept neurodivergent students and to raise awareness of the challenges neurodivergent students face in their educational journey; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.