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CALIFORNIA STATE BOARD OF GUIDE DOGS FOR THE BLIND  
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May 17, 2016

Assemblywoman Ling Ling Chang  
State Capitol, Room 3149  
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 1824 – Support if Amended

Dear Assemblywoman Chang:

On April 8, 2015, the California State Board of Guide Dogs for the Blind (Board) voted to support AB 1824 (Chang) (as introduced February 08, 2016) if amended. On May 9, 2016, the Board voted to recommend language outlined in this letter.

I would like to express my appreciation of your concern for the guide dog using community. I am writing to you on behalf of the Board to express support, but also to address concerns regarding the proposals outlined in AB 1824.

This bill would remove the requirement that a guide, signal, or service dog be in discharge of its duties when injury or death occurs by an individual intentionally harming the dog, or by an individual permitting their dog to harm the guide, signal, or service dog. Additionally this bill would make the convicted individual responsible to pay restitution for medical or medical-related expenses, or for loss of wages or income, incurred by the person as a direct result of the crime.

While the Board is in full support of stricter penalties for crimes against guide, signal, and service dogs and their handlers, a concern arose regarding the ability to prove intent when an individual harms these teams. Based on the experiences of some of our guide dog handling members, law enforcement has historically been unable to enforce the law set forth in Penal Code Section 600.5 because of the onerous requirement to prove intent. For this reason, the Board suggests replacing the word “intentionally” with “willfully or recklessly” and believes that this will give law enforcement the ability to better enforce crimes against guide, signal, and service dogs.

Please feel free to contact my Executive Officer, Brian Skewis, at (916) 574-7825 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,  
ORIGINAL SIGNED BY:  
Eric Holm  
Board President

cc: Assembly Committee on Public Safety  
Senate Standing Committee on Public Safety  
Adam Quinonez, Assistant Deputy Director, Legislative and Regulatory Review, Department of Consumer Affairs