



**Disability and Guardianship Project
Disability and Abuse Project**

9420 Reseda Blvd. #240, Northridge, CA 91324
(818) 230-5156 • www.spectruminstitute.org

January 20, 2017

Honorable Xavier Becerra
Attorney General
300 S. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90013

Re: The Role of the Attorney General in Protecting the Civil Rights
of People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Dear Attorney General Becerra:

I am writing to you in anticipation of a favorable Senate vote next week so that my letter reaches your desk by the time you assume the duties of California's Attorney General. As you may know, Article V, Section 13 declares: "It shall be the duty of the Attorney General to see that the laws of the State are uniformly and adequately enforced." Those laws include constitutional and statutory provisions protecting the civil rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

For the past few years, I have focused my attention on what I call the "limited conservatorship system" in California – policies and practices that assess the capacities of adults with developmental disabilities and restrict the civil liberties of such adults to the extent that probate judges deem it appropriate. After extensive research into all aspects of this system, I have concluded that judges, court-appointed attorneys, and others involved in the limited conservatorship system have been systematically violating the rights of tens of thousands of Californians with disabilities who become involved in these proceedings. Violations of the Americans with Disabilities Act are routine. Materials I have published on this subject are found at: <http://spectruminstitute.org/library/>

Spectrum Institute has reached out to many elected officials about this problem. Among those we have contacted are: the Chief Justice of California, the Judicial Council of California, the State Bar of California, the Senate Judiciary Committee, and the Department of Developmental Services.

The Office of the Attorney General can play an important role in protecting the constitutional and statutory civil rights – both federal and state – of people with disabilities in limited conservatorship proceedings. We invite the Civil Rights Enforcement Section to work with us toward that end.

Respectfully submitted:

Thomas F. Coleman
Legal Director, Spectrum Institute
tomcoleman@spectruminstitute.org

cc: Ms. Angela Sierra
Senior Assistant Attorney General