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Regional Centers Serving Californians with Developmental Disabilities Need Increased Funding to Hire Additional Staff to Ensure Delivery of Core Services

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sacramento — Discussions on the State's upcoming Fiscal Year 2021–21 must include prioritizing additional funding for the 21 regional centers that serve over 350,000 Californians with developmental disabilities. They are the official point of entry to the State's service system. Current State funding directed to the regional centers is insufficient and as a result, statewide, regional centers are short 921 service coordinators. The Association of Regional Centers Agencies (ARCA) urges the Budget Committees to increase funding with an additional ongoing allocation of \$60 million annually.

The 21 regional centers' work begins, for many they serve, with the Early Start program that focuses on early intervention. Depending on a child's needs, this work continues throughout childhood and into adulthood with an array of assessments, referrals, lifelong individual planning and case management, advocacy, vocational support, and much more. Regional centers strive to keep individuals with their families, but they also help with planning placement and monitoring for out-of-home care.

Much of this work is accomplished by service coordinators who manage staggering caseloads, working with families and individuals to provide the support and quality services that enable them to live fully integrated lives. These crucial staff provide a wide range of support that helps those served by the centers to overcome a variety of unique challenges. There is a crisis, however, because there are simply not enough service coordinators to sufficiently meet the growing demands regional centers face.

"The State's budget outlook for the coming fiscal year is vastly improved from where we stood in 2020 and it's time to make new investments that help California's most vulnerable, including people with developmental disabilities. The regional centers rely on significant State funding to connect the people we serve with the comprehensive range of services they require to live full and integrated lives," said Amy Westling, Executive Director, Association of Regional Center Agencies. "Our budget ask would allow short-staffed regional centers to hire more service coordinators who serve as the backbone of the important work we do."

Because regional centers lack adequate State funding, service coordinator salaries are startlingly low and unrealistic. Regional centers are budgeted salaries for service coordinators at

just over \$34,000 annually - only 52 percent of the actual cost of these core staff. The funding formula is extremely outdated and based on a 20-year-old adjustment. ARCA's budget ask of an additional \$60 million allocation would fill the gap and enable regional centers to hire the additional staff needed.

This State funding ask also has broader implications for regional centers because of the interconnectedness of federal funds. Insufficient State funding impacts regional centers' ability to receive federal dollars, which today provide over 40 percent of an average year's funding for the \$10 billion system.

For more information about ARCA and the regional centers, visit arcenet.org.

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