



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Educate.Advocate and A Voice for Choice Advocacy, Inc.  
Release Statement Regarding Senator Pan's Committee Noticing Procedures

**Is Senator Pan really wanting public comment and feedback at his Town Hall's and Select Committee hearings or is it at best self-serving and at worst censorship?**

RANCH CUCAMONGA AND MOUNTAIN VIEW, CA, April 3, 2017 – In the past week State Senator Pan (D-Sacramento) has scheduled and hosted a Town Hall Hearing regarding SB18 (the Children's Bill of Rights) in West Sacramento on March 29, 2017, as well as a hearing for the *Select Committee on Children with Special Needs* at the Sacramento Capitol, today April 3, 2017.

Both these meetings were publicized less than 2 business days prior to the actual meetings. The Town Hall was published on Senator Pan's Facebook page on March 27, 2017, two days before the event. Both these meetings had RSVP requests which is unnecessary for public meetings. Only attendees who had RSVP'd were initially allowed into the main room at the Town Hall meeting. Senator Pan had hosted another Town Hall earlier in March which generated a lot of protest and negative public comment. One has to ask if he only gave 2 days public notice for his March 29<sup>th</sup> Town Hall to ensure people invited directly by him would give positive feedback and those with negative input would be deterred by the late notice and inconvenient 5pm timing. The Town Hall ended abruptly in response to the disruption due to constituents voicing their dissatisfaction and the panel walking out after the lights and microphones were turned off to prevent more public comment. Video of end of the meeting can be found here:

<https://www.facebook.com/remington.constable/videos/10212851115340550/>

Although, the *Select Committee on Children with Special Needs* hearing was published 4 days prior to the hearing, as required by the CA Joint Rules committee, one also has to ask if it was noticed hours before a holiday weekend to ensure minimal public input, knowing that parents of special needs children cannot just travel to Sacramento on a whim. Unfortunately for Senator Pan, his constituents are resistant, making sure they show up and speak up. A Voice for Choice Advocacy and Educate.Advocate, two organizations concerned with Senator Pan's conduct, who advocate on behalf of California's children, attended or ensured they were represented for those who could not make the last minute meetings.

Christina Hildebrand, President and Founder of A Voice for Choice Advocacy, made the following statement earlier today: "Senator Pan's constituents and those interested in issues he brings forward are waking up and realizing that Senator Pan does not have their best interests at heart and that he does not want their opinions voiced. He is manipulating the notification process so that it is harder for these people to know about and attend his meetings. His lack of adequate notification is a purely self-serving attempt that those attending are of his choosing, positive and put him in a better light than reality. This is unacceptable. As a public servant, Senator Pan needs to recognize that he should not be censoring or preventing people from attending his public meetings because he wants to limit the amount of negative exposure towards himself or his stand on important issues."

Christina Hildebrand continued, "Don't be fooled by Senator Pan saying he is passionate about the issues of special needs and the children of California. There have been three hearings of the

*Select Committee on Children with Special Needs*, in the past 18 months with no outcome or actions to show for them. They have been scheduled with little notice, at times when the rest of the committee members are not in Sacramento, making it a hearing of one – Senator Pan. In fact, it seems that many of the other committee members were not aware of this morning’s hearing and some were not even aware they were committee members. Even the speakers selected by Senator Pan for this morning’s hearing had harsh words for the senator about how little is being done by the state to address California’s special needs children. This committee allows Senator Pan to publicize he is doing something for our special needs children, but it has become abundantly clear, as has been shown by many news articles, Senator Pan has his own financial gains driving his actions, and therefore the organizations who support him and his legislation are given priority over his constituents or the people of California who he should be representing.”

Kristie Sepulveda-Burchit, President and Founder of special needs advocacy group, *Educate. Advocate.*, issued the following statement after first learning about an upcoming hearing by the *Select Committee on Children with Special Needs* from a tweet:

“I’ve developed great working relationships with many of our California legislators who care about special needs families. Normally, legislative staff and other advocacy organizations provide me with notification of upcoming special meetings and relevant hearings in plenty of time. This issue is extremely important to me and I am disappointed that the committee has only met twice -- once in December of 2015 and then last year in April. All year I have awaited the opportunity to join families in representing those with special needs. And then to realize that they neglected to contact me -- it was really disappointing.”

Part of Ms. Sepulveda-Burchit’s mission is to provide current information to special needs families. On August 9, 2016, she had communicated with Christina Jade and Darin Walsh, the Committee coordinators, requesting that they provide email notification of any upcoming hearings for the *Select Committee on Children with Special Needs*. She hoped that they would honor her request. Instead, she learned about the today’s hearing just days before the scheduled date from a tweet by *Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health*.

“I have to wonder if the California Senate Select Committee for Children with Special Needs truly wishes to engage parents of special needs children. How are advocates and special needs families supposed to make arrangements to be at the hearing on Monday April 3, 2017 at 10 am, when we first learned about it late Thursday on March 30, 2017? In a state the size of California, special needs families need ample time to prepare to attend a committee hearing. The committee chair doesn’t seem to grasp the challenges that special needs families face. If they really care about special needs families, they need to communicate better and give special needs families plenty of time to get to Sacramento.”

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