The Honorable Reginald Byron Jones-Sawyer, Chair

Assembly Committee on Public Safety

State Capitol

Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: In support of AB 468 ‘Guide, Signal, and Service Dogs’

Dear Assembly Member Jones-Sawyer,

I’m writing to you to ask for your support of AB 468 sponsored by Guide Dogs for the Blind and Canine Companions for Independence and introduced by Assembly Member Laura Friedman. AB468 is designed to address the growing online sale of fraudulent service animal certificates by unscrupulous opportunists.  These certificates are often sold online with the promise of providing people with pets public access equal to people with disabilities accompanied by their service animals.as defined by Federal law under the ADA.  In addition to misleading people, these unscrupulous business practices have also resulted in putting innocent untrained animals in uncomfortable, scary, and even dangerous situations.  These so called ‘emotional support animals’ are pets with little or no specialized training. Both legitimate service dogs as well as innocent bystanders have unfortunately been also attacked and hurt by these untrained animals.

AB 468 will require health care practitioners who provide documentation relating to an individual’s need for an emotional support animal to:

• possess a valid, active license including the effective date, license number, jurisdiction, and type of professional license;

• to be licensed to provide professional services in the jurisdiction in which the documentation is provided;

• have a client-provider relationship at least 30 days prior to providing documentation of need;

• and to complete in-person clinical evaluation for the client regarding the need for an emotional support dog.

In recent years, confusion between legitimate service dogs and pets has been fueled by the growing availability of service dog certificates and vests via the internet. The confusion this creates makes it more difficult for persons with disabilities assisted by a legitimate service dog to travel without being harassed. Doing so will reduce a fundamental threat to the access and independence that legitimate guide dogs and other service dogs enable.

Sincerely,