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May 22, 2017

The Honorable Ricardo Lara
Chair, Senate Appropriation Committee
State Capitol, Room 2206
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Senate Bill 244 (Lara) Privacy: agencies: personal information – Support
As Amended May 3, 2017

Dear Senator Lara:

The Consumer Federation of California writes in support of your legislation, Senate Bill 244, which protects individual privacy and promotes “good government” principles by prohibiting state and local agencies from collecting and recording personal information, or disclosing records containing personal information, for purposes not directly related to the administration of public services and programs.

California has made great strides in the past 15 years in celebrating and valuing the presence of diverse immigrant communities within the state. In recognition of this value, California has worked to ensure that all residents have access to critical services and can contribute to and participate fully in our economy by obtaining professional or business licenses, driver’s licenses, financial aid, and health care for their children.

SB 244 aligns with California’s longstanding history of protecting personal privacy rights. SB 244 ensures that all residents, regardless of religion, health condition, gender, gender identity, citizenship, immigration status or status as a survivor of crime, know that information they provide to government agencies is confidential. This is critical to the success of state and local programs that maintain public health and safety.

The National Bureau of Economic Research has found, for example, that concerns about heightened immigration enforcement reduces Medicaid participation by young children of noncitizens. Similar concerns have affected access to other programs. Eisner Health, a Los Angeles area provider to low-income Latino residents, has reported a recent 20 percent drop in food stamp applications and an 80 percent drop in My Health LA, a program intended to serve indigent adults. Educators across the nation have reported increased absences in school since President Trump’s immigration enforcement actions commenced. In addition, crime survivors, including survivors of sexual assault, have been afraid to report crimes.

SB 244 addresses some of these concerns by ensuring that government agencies can fulfill their programmatic missions and protect the personal information of their program applicants and recipients to the greatest degree allowed by law.

Thank you for your leadership on this important issue.

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Holober". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "H".

Richard Holober
Executive Director

cc: Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee
Senator Lara