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**Dublin Student Chosen to Participate in 90<sup>th</sup> Annual  
California State Capitol Tree Lighting Ceremony**

Event to be held on Thursday, December 2, 2021, at 5:30 pm

SACRAMENTO, CA – Hadiyyah (Hadi) Esmat, a 6-year-old from Dublin, CA, will help Governor Gavin Newsom and First Partner Jennifer Siebel Newsom light this year's California State Capitol Tree. Hadi was selected by the Regional Center of the East Bay (RCEB) and the California Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to represent more than 360,000 Californians who have intellectual and developmental disabilities and receive services from the state's nonprofit regional centers and facilities operated by DDS.

Hadi began receiving Early Start services through the regional center when she was 18 months old. Later diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder, she now receives specialized supports through the Lanterman Developmental Disability Services Act. This independent first grader of Afghan descent receives Special Education and related services at her local public school. Her favorite activities include being outside in nature, going for walks, and playing in the park. She loves spending time with her mother, Halai Akbari, and her extended family. Hadi's mother, aunt, uncle and cousin will be joining her on the West Steps of the Capitol for the tree lighting ceremony.

"Hadi is the perfect candidate to help Governor Newsom with the 90th annual California Capitol Tree Lighting Ceremony. Her energy is radiant, and she is an inspiration. We are proud that Hadi is representing Californians who have intellectual and developmental disabilities," said DDS Director Nancy Bargmann.

California Health and Human Services Secretary, Dr. Mark Ghaly also welcomes Hadi's participation in this year's event.

"Hadi's representation is important as a demonstration of Californians who receive regional center services, and in exemplifying California's priority to improve the lives of our most vulnerable and create opportunities for ALL Californians."

RCEB, supporting individuals in Alameda and Contra Costa counties, is one of 21 regional centers that is a community-based, private non-profit corporation under contract with DDS to plan and coordinate services and supports for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and their families.

This year's 65-foot white fir California State Capitol tree is decorated with approximately 14,000 ultra-low wattages LED lights and more than 500 hand-crafted ornaments made by children and adults who receive services from regional centers and state-operated facilities. For more information visit: <https://www.dds.ca.gov/general/news-room/capitol-christmas-tree-lighting/>

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