Date, 2019

The Honorable Jim Beall

California State Senator

California State Capitol, Room 2082

Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Senator Beall,

**Re: SB 10 (Beall): Medi-Cal: Peer Support Specialists Certification-SUPPORT**

The County of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is in strong support of SB10 (Beall).

SB 10 would establish a Peer, Parent, Transition Age and Family Support Specialist Certification Program to be administered by the Department of Health Care Services. Peer providers who use their life experience with mental illness and recovery, coupled with skills learned through formal training, have proven a valuable addition to service delivery in mental health settings. Research demonstrates that use of qualified peer support specialists has measurable benefits to clients, including reduced hospitalizations, improved functioning, alleviation of depression and other symptoms, and enhanced self-advocacy. A peer support program also creates a career ladder so that consumers and family members working in mental health care have the opportunity to fully contribute, translating their experience into meaningful employment.

Across California, peer providers are already utilized in many settings. However, there is no state-wide standard of practice, consistent curriculum, training standards, supervision standards, or certification protocol.

Creation of a state certification program, as laid out in SB 10, would:

* Define the service of peer support.
* Standardize the quality of services provided by peer support specialists.
* Assure that practitioners receive standardized training and demonstrate competency.
* Allow for portability of certification to other counties and providers in the state.

Just as important, establishing a state certification program would enable California providers to bill federal Medicaid (Medi-Cal in California) for 50 percent of the cost of services provided by certified, allowing peer services to become a sustainable piece of the state’s mental health care delivery system.

In 2007, the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) sent a guidance letter to all state Medicaid directors emphasizing, “peer support services are an evidence-based mental health model of care which consists of a qualified peer support provider who assists individuals with their recovery

from mental illness and substance use disorders.” CMS encouraged states to establish a state certification process for training, credentialing, supervision and care coordination. (CMS, SMDL #07-011)[[1]](#endnote-1)

The District of Columbia, the U.S. Department of Veteran’s Affairs and 48 states have already adopted state-certified programs to establish consistent standards of care and professionalism for peer providers, enabling nearly all states to leverage Medicaid funds.

The time has come for California to embrace peer support as an evidence-based model and put in place a certification program that will standardize best practices. SB 10 makes sense from both a policy and fiscal perspective, and will result in a more comprehensive and effective approach to mental health care. It is for these reasons that we support SB 10.

Sincerely,

Name(s), Title(s)

Organization

cc: Senator Beall Staff: Gregory Cramer gregory.cramer@sen.ca.gov

cc: Steinberg Institute Staff: Adrienne Shilton adrienne@steinberginstitute.org

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cc: Senate Health Committee: Reyes Diaz reyes.diaz@sen.ca.gov

1. United States Department of Health & Human Services, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Guidance Letter to State Medicaid Directors, SMDL #07-011, August 15, 2007. <http://downloads.cms.gov/cmsgov/archived-downloads/SMDL/downloads/SMD081507A.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)