



May 23, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Skinner
Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review
State Capitol, Room 5019
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Phil Ting
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
State Capitol, Room 6026
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Susan Talamantes Eggman
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3

The Honorable Dr. Joaquin Arambula
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1

Honorable Members
Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3

Honorable Members
Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1

Subject: Governor Newsom’s Proposed May Revision Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program – SUPPORT

Dear Chair Skinner, Chair Ting, Chair Eggman, and Chair Arambula:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we write in support of the Governor’s May Revision proposal to allocate \$2.455 billion total funds in funding to eligible entities over five years for the acquisition and rehabilitation of real estate assets to expand the community continuum of behavioral health treatment resources.

We would like to express appreciation to the Administration for acknowledging the significant and special needs of children and youth and dedicating a minimum of \$255 million for increased infrastructure for individuals aged 25 and under. This will serve as critical funding to build out a trauma-informed dedicated system to meet the needs of youth, including those in the foster care system.

Additionally, we would like to express appreciation to the Administration for proposing \$250 million minimum to provide competitive grants for increased infrastructure for justice-involved individuals with a serious mental illness that are deemed incompetent to stand trial (IST). This investment will help to build community capacity to ensure the success of the Department of State Hospitals proposals to build out community-based restoration options and diversion program opportunities.

County behavioral health, in collaboration with contracted community-based organizations, are responsible for the delivery of Medi-Cal substance use disorder (SUD) services, Medi-Cal specialty mental health services for adults with serious mental illness (SMI), and children who meet criteria for medically necessary services. Financing restrictions on the primary sources of funding for the county behavioral health safety net have limited the ability of county behavioral health agencies to invest in building out the full continuum of community-based treatment services across California.

Investment in our community behavioral health continuum of services is essential to ensuring the needs of low-income Medi-Cal beneficiaries with SMI and SUD, and children with severe emotional disturbance are met—particularly post-pandemic. A new report published by Kaiser Family Foundation in February 2021 found that nationally:

- There has been a four-fold increase on the number of individuals reporting symptoms of anxiety and depressive disorders—now above 40% of American adults;
- Young people were twice as likely to report new or increased substance use and suicidal thoughts—now above a quarter of American youth;
- California has seen a steady and alarming increase in children’s inpatient visits for suicide, suicidal ideation, and self-injury—with a 151% increase for children ages 10-14.
- Adults in households with job loss or lower incomes report nearly double the rate of symptoms of mental illness; and
- Essential workers and communities of color have been disproportionately impacted and report higher rates of anxiety and depressive disorder symptoms.

These statistics support reports that since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increase in acute psychiatric episodes and an alarming epidemic of opioid related overdoses in

California. Specifically, there has been a surge in overdose related deaths driven by fentanyl throughout the state—in some parts of the state outpacing deaths from COVID-19.

This investment could not come at a more critical time to invest in facilities to build out the public behavioral health safety net as COVID-19 has exacerbated and exemplified the need for a robust behavioral health system. The Governor’s proposal to invest \$2.455 billion in the community behavioral health continuum will provide the public behavioral health safety net with long overdue opportunities to invest in the types of community-based services that are necessary to prevent the avoidable homelessness, incarceration, hospitalization, and forced treatment of individuals with significant behavioral health needs.

For all these reasons, we respectfully request your support for the Governor’s May Revision proposal of \$2.455 billion investment in the community behavioral health continuum.

Sincerely,



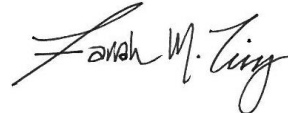
Michelle Doty Cabrera
Executive Director
County Behavioral Health Directors Association



Theresa Comstock
Executive Director
CA Association of Local Behavioral Health
Boards and Commissions



Kelly Brooks-Lindsey
Partner, Hurst Brooks Espinosa
Urban Counties of CA



Farrah McDaid-Ting
Senior Legislative Representative
California State Association of Counties



Sarah Dukett
Legislative Advocate
Rural County Representatives of CA




Christine Stoner-Mertz, LCSW
Chief Executive Officer
CA Alliance of Child and Family Services



Maggie Merritt
Executive Director
Steinberg Institute



Albert M. Senella
President
CA Association of Alcohol and Drug Program
Executives



Faith Richie
Senior Vice President
Telecare Corporation



Jessica Cruz
Chief Executive Officer
National Alliance on Mental Illness—California



Noel O'Neill
Council Chair
CA Behavioral Health Planning Council



Le Ondra Clark Harvey, Ph.D.
Chief Executive Officer
CA Council of Community Behavioral Health
Agencies



Lauren Rettagliata
Housing That Heals



Teresa Pasquini
Housing That Heals



Heidi Strunk
President & Chief Executive Officer
Mental Health America of CA



Carolyn Shepard
Coordinator
Solutions for Supportive Homes



Pete Nielsen
Chief Executive Officer
CA Consortium of Addiction Programs and
Professionals

Cc:

Keely Martin Bosler, Finance Director, California Department of Finance (DoF)
Ana J. Matosantos, Cabinet Secretary, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom
Dr. Mark Ghaly, Secretary, California Health and Human Services Agency (CHHS)
Michelle Baass, Undersecretary, CHHS
Stephanie Welch, Deputy Secretary, CHHS
William Lightbourne, Director, Department of Health Care Services (DHCS)
Dr. Kelly Pfeifer, Deputy Director, Behavioral Health, DHCS
Richard Figueroa, Office of the Governor
Tam Ma, Office of the Governor
Ryan Miller, Assistant Program Budget Manager, DoF
Iliana Ramos, Principal Program Budget Analyst, DoF
Marjorie Swartz, Office of the Senate President Pro Tempore
Agnes Lee, Office of the Speaker of the Assembly
Chris Woods, Office of the Senate President Pro Tempore
Jason Sisney, Office of the Speaker of the Assembly
Scott Ogus, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee No. 3
Andrea Margolis, Assembly Committee on Budget Subcommittee No. 1

Joe Parra, Senate Republican Fiscal Office
Joe Shinstock, Assembly Republican Fiscal Office
Corey Hashida, Legislative Analyst's Office
Ben Johnson, Legislative Analyst's Office