



May 2, 2018

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

**Subject: Support – SB 906 (Beall and Anderson) Medi-Cal: Mental health peer supports**

Dear Chairman Ricardo Lara,

On behalf of the members of the California Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems (CAPH) and the millions of patients they serve, I am writing to voice our support for SB 906. This bill would institute a certification system for peer support services to integrate these service providers fully into the Medi-Cal mental health and substance use disorder delivery system.

As you know, California's 21 public health care systems play a central role in the state's safety net and health care landscape, delivering care to all who need it, regardless of ability to pay or circumstance. Though just six percent of all California hospitals statewide, they serve 2.85 million Californians each year, provide 35 percent of all hospital care to the Medi-Cal population in our communities, and nearly 40 percent of all hospital care to the state's uninsured residents. They also serve hundreds of thousands of Californians as their primary source for primary, specialty, and hospital care. To a large extent, their patient population has complex and multiple medical needs. Filling their significant and multiple roles, public health care systems have a profound impact on the health care and health of millions of Californians.

People with behavioral health disorders experience multiple complex challenges to their health and well-being, and being linked with peers who can connect on equal terms because they have gone through the recovery process themselves is a powerful aid. Peer support counselors may provide mentoring, life or vocational skills training, assist with accessing community services, and facilitate contacts with other people to build community. Already, at least 36 states have adopted a certification program to add this service to their repertory of behavioral health interventions. Some California counties already provide peer support services on their own initiative, but under CMS guidance, for these services to be added to the state Medicaid plan to draw down federal financial participation in a regularized, predictable way, the state must have a set of standards for these services, including the training and credentialing that qualifies professionals to provide them. By instituting statewide certification program, SB 906 would meet this CMS guidance and make it easier for all counties to sustainably integrate these services into their care delivery structures. It would also tie in with ongoing ambitious local projects to organize systems to care for the whole person across the continuum of health and social supports.



For these reasons, we support SB 906. We would be pleased to further discuss our position with you and answer any questions you may have. Please contact Terri Thomas, our Sacramento representative, at 916-325-1010 if you would like to follow up. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Erica Murray  
President and CEO

cc:

The Honorable Jim Beall  
The Honorable Joel Anderson  
The Honorable members of the Senate Appropriations Committee  
Mark McKenzie, Staff Director  
Samantha Lui, Committee Consultant  
Joe Parra, Republican Consultant  
Terri Thomas, Thomas Advocacy