



March 25, 2019

The Honorable Richard Pan, Chair  
Senate Health Committee  
State Capitol, Room 5114  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Subject: Support – RE: SB 10 (Beall): Medi-Cal: Peer Support Specialists Certification**

Dear Chairman Pan,

On behalf of the members of the California Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems and the millions of patients they serve, I am writing to voice our support for SB 10. This bill would standardize high-quality peer and family support services.

California's 21 public health care systems are the core of the state's health care safety net, delivering high-quality care to more than 2.85 million patients annually, regardless of ability to pay or insurance status. Most patients seen in public health care systems are either Medi-Cal beneficiaries or remain uninsured and statewide we provide nearly 30 and 40 percent of hospital care to the state's Medi-Cal and uninsured populations, respectively, and provide over 10 million outpatient visits each year. Public health care systems also operate half of the state's top-level trauma and burn centers, and train half of all physicians in the state.

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.

As safety net providers that serve many vulnerable populations in our communities, including individuals with behavioral health conditions, we recognize the importance of peer support. Individuals 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 similar experiences themselves, may serve as a powerful resource. 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 could also create 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 and some California counties already provide peer support services on their own initiative, for example under the

1115 Medi-Cal waiver's Whole Person Care Pilots. However, there is no statewide 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.

By instituting a statewide certification program, SB 10 would make it easier for all counties to sustainably integrate these services into their care delivery structures. It would also support ongoing ambitious local projects that are working to organize systems to care for vulnerable populations across the continuum of health and social supports.

For these reasons, we support SB 10. We would be pleased to further discuss our position with you and answer any questions you may have. Please contact Kelly Brooks-Lindsey, our Sacramento representative, at 916-272-0011 if you would like to follow-up. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



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cc: The Honorable Jim Beall  
The Honorable Members of the Senate Health Committee  
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