



July 22, 2020

The Honorable Jim Wood, Chair  
Assembly Health Committee  
State Capitol, Room 6005  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Subject: Support – RE: SB 803 (Beall): Mental Health: Statewide Certification for Peer Support Specialists**

Dear Chairman Wood,

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 803, which would establish professional standards and certification for Peer Support Specialists.

As you know, 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. Public health care systems include both county-operated or -affiliated facilities as well as the University of California medical centers. Most patients seen in public health care systems are either Medi-Cal beneficiaries or remain uninsured. Statewide, we provide nearly 40 percent of all hospital care to the state's uninsured, and 35 percent of all hospital care to the Medi-Cal population. Public health care systems also operate over half of the state's top-level trauma and burn centers, and train half of all physicians in the state.

As safety net providers that serve many vulnerable populations in our communities, including those experiencing behavioral health needs, we recognize the importance of peer support. Individuals with behavioral health disorders often experience multiple complex challenges to their health and well-being, and the ability to link these individuals with peers who have gone through similar experiences themselves may serve as a powerful resource. Across California, peer providers are already utilized in many settings, including Whole Person Care pilots. However, California lacks a statewide standard of practice, consistent curriculum, training standards, supervision standards, and certification protocol.

Research has demonstrated that the 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.

It is for these reasons that we support SB 803. 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,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sarah Hesketh".

Sarah Hesketh  
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cc: The Honorable Jim Beall  
The Honorable Members of the Assembly Health Committee  
Scott Bain, Committee Consultant  
Alex Khan, Republican Consultant  
Kelly Brooks-Lindsey, Hurst Brooks Espinosa