



Workforce and Employment Committee Letter to Legislature Re: WET Five Year Plan Funding (Fiscal Year 2018-19)

May 31, 2018

RE: One Year Funding Extension for Statewide Workforce Education and Training (WET) Program via the General Fund – **SUPPORT**

CHAIRPERSON
Raja Mitry

EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Jane Adcock

Dear Budget Conference Committee Members,

The Planning Council supports the community's request to appropriate \$26,436,022 million from the General Fund for the Statewide Workforce Education and Training (WET) Five Year Plan for Fiscal Year 2018-19. The current Five Year Plan, per the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), has only been budgeted for four years through the end of June 2018 due to the 10-year time limit for WET allocations and the loss of a year during the dismantling of the Department of Mental Health. **Please note that if surplus General Fund dollars are not available, the Council supports the use of Mental Health Service Account Administrative Fund be considered as a funding source for this program.** However, MHSA Administrative Fund dollars **would not be available until the Spring of 2019 leaving an approximate 10 month gap in funding for essential loan repayment and stipend programs.**

- **Advocacy**
- **Evaluation**
- **Inclusion**

Workforce development, which includes recruiting, training and retention of trainees and licensed professionals, is a top priority for the California Behavioral health Planning Council. There has been an increasing demand for services in both the mental health and substance use disorder fields, among others, which has been exacerbated by an increased demand for services created by the inclusion of behavioral health services as an Essential Health Benefit in the Affordable Care Act (ACA). This additional demand strained an aging behavioral healthcare workforce that was diminishing faster than it could be replenished. Health service agencies across the state continually struggle to fill open positions to meet demand, but this is especially difficult in the clinical and licensed categories. The WET funding addressed these issues by providing support for a variety of training initiatives including loan repayment and salary stipend programs – incentives that have shown to help alleviate financial stressors of service providers and encourage them to continue working in rural and urban locations that have traditionally had difficulty attracting service providers.

There is broad acceptance in the behavioral health community for the development of a new plan that is comprehensive, **sustainable** and builds

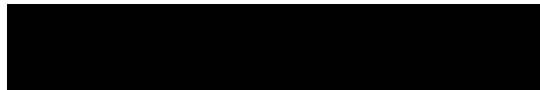
in accountability. Currently, the Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development (OSHPD) is working to gather the data from counties to produce a report that will review what has been accomplished over the last four years. **In the meantime, it our belief that allowing a one-year gap in funding for the WET programs will add to the shortage of health workers, as many professionals who are receiving stipends and loan forgiveness will lose that funding.** Additionally, restarting the programs 1 year later will be more expensive in addition to the delay.

The WET Plan has resulted in successful programs, namely various Loan Forgiveness Programs and stipend programs for trainees. These programs, have been identified as a critical element in addressing workforce shortages, especially for clinical providers. **Please note that this appears to be the *only* proposal that will fund Master's level licensed behavioral health clinicians (social workers, professional counselors, marriage and family therapists) and psychologists in order to ameliorate the behavioral health workforce shortage.**

Therefore, the Council respectfully asks the Budget Committees to support a one-year funding of the WET programs through the 2018-19 fiscal year. The total approved budget for FY 2017-18 is \$25,436,022 and we request the same amount for FY 2018-19 with an additional \$1 million allotment for OSHPD's administrative fees for a total of **\$26,436,022**.

If there are any questions or if we can provide additional information, please contact our Executive Officer, Jane Adcock, at (916) 322-3807 or jane.adcock@cbhpc.ca.gov .

Sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Raja Mitry.

Raja Mitry
Chairperson