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Lorraine Flores

EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
Jane Adcock

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

August 31, 2020

The Honorable Gavin C. Newsom  
California State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Senate Bill 803 (Beall) Peer Support Specialist Certification-  
Request for Signature**

Dear Governor Newsom,

The California Behavioral Health Planning Council (CBHPC) strongly urges you to sign Senate Bill 803.

The Council is under federal and state mandate to advocate on behalf of adults with severe mental illness and children with severe emotional disturbances and their families. We are also statutorily required to advise you on mental health issues, policies and priorities in California.

The Council has long advocated for peer certification in the state of California and now it is more crucial than ever for the following reasons:

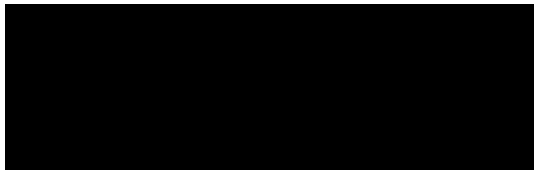
- California is grappling with the COVID-19 public health emergency, the worst wildfires in our state's history and ongoing racial inequities. We must prepare for what comes next: a massive behavioral health crisis resulting from uncertainty, trauma and despair. To flatten this next curve, California must scale up our use of proven, quality Peer Support Services for behavioral health.
- Many of the Californians experiencing trauma right now come from communities of color who have cultural and non-English language needs. We can't wait to diversify our behavioral health workforce so our clients can turn to a provider who shares their background and experience. Peers can bridge the gap.
- There is no risk. Research demonstrates that use of qualified peer support specialists has measurable benefits including reduced hospitalizations, improved functioning, alleviation of depression and other symptoms, and enhanced self-advocacy. This results in reduced costs which can offset upfront implementation costs.
- Establishing a certification program would enable California providers to bill federal Medicaid for 50 percent of the cost of services provided by certified peers for counties that opt in.

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- Peer providers who use their life experience with mental illness and recovery, coupled with skills learned through formal training, have proven to be a valuable addition to service delivery in mental health settings. This program would yield an excellent return on investment.

When you took office, you stated that you would make meeting the mental health needs of Californians with serious mental illness a priority. Signing SB 803 will be a big step forward in fulfilling that promise. It is for these reasons that we respectfully urge you to sign SB 803 for Peer Support Specialist Certification. If you have any questions, please contact Jane Adcock, Executive Officer, at (916) 750-1862 or [Jane.Adcock@cbhpc.dhcs.ca.gov](mailto:Jane.Adcock@cbhpc.dhcs.ca.gov).

Sincerely,



Lorraine Flores  
Chairperson

Cc: Tam Ma, Office of Governor Newsom  
Tom Steel, Office of Senator Beall  
Sunshine Borelli, Office of Senator Beall