



CHAIRPERSON
Raja Mistry

EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Jane Adcock

- Advocacy
- Evaluation
- Inclusion

December 13, 2018

The Honorable Jim Beall
California State Senator
California State Capitol, Room 2082
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: **SUPPORT** for Senate Bill 10 (SB 10) Medi-Cal: Peer Provider Certification

Dear Senator Beall:

The California Behavioral Health Planning Council (CBHPC) strongly supports Senate Bill (SB) 10. We are pleased to join our numerous colleagues who also support this legislation including California counties, health/mental health organizations and advocates who are calling upon the state to standardize high-quality peer and family support services.

The Council has long advocated for the use of peers in the health system. A priority for our Workforce and Employment Committee's is to identify solutions for the workforce shortage. Expanding who is considered part of the workforce and standardization of a program to certify peer providers in the state of California is a major step to increasing access to care, services and treatment. The employment of peer providers would facilitate a workforce that is more culturally, linguistically, faith, gender and recovery-sensitive to those are under- and unserved in the public behavioral health system.

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. Research demonstrates that use of qualified peer support specialists has measurable benefits to consumers, including reduced hospitalizations, improved functioning, alleviation of depression and other symptoms, and enhanced self-advocacy. A peer support program also creates 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.

California has been a national leader in cutting edge policies and programming to better meet the needs of individuals living with serious mental illness. Currently forty states plus the District of Columbia and the U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs have implemented protocols to certify peer specialists, and four additional states are in the process of creating certification programs, enabling the majority of states to leverage Medicaid funds. *And yet, California has not acted!* Voter approval of Proposition 63 indicates the value of the voice and

MS 2706
PO Box 997413
Sacramento, CA 95899-7413
916.323.4501
fax 916.319.8030

contributions of persons with lived experience but somewhere we lost that vision.

The time has come for California to embrace peer providers as an evidence-based model and put in place a certification program that will standardize this best practice. SB 10 makes sense from both a policy and fiscal perspective, and will result in a more comprehensive and effective approach to mental health care as well as increase access through this addition to the workforce. It is for these reasons that we support SB 10.

The Council thanks you for supporting this essential step in bolstering the behavioral health workforce in California. If you have any questions, please contact Jane Adcock, Executive Officer, at (916) 322-3807 or Jane.Adcock@cbhpc.dhcs.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Raja Mitry". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and a distinct "M".

Raja Mitry
Chairperson

Cc: Gregory Cramer, Policy Consultant
Adrienne Shilton, Steinberg Institute