



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

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March 13, 2018

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The Honorable Ed Hernandez, O.D., Chair
Senate Health Committee
State Capitol, Room 2080
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 906 (Beall and Anderson), As Introduced January 31, 2018 – SUPPORT
Relating to Medi-Cal: Mental Health Services: Peer Certification
Hearing Set March 14, 2018, in the Senate Health Committee**

Dear Senator Hernandez:

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors supports SB 906 (Beall and Anderson).

SB 906 would establish a statewide peer provider certificate program, including specialized training for peers to offer individualized support services to persons with mental health needs. It would authorize the California Department of Health Care Services to amend the State's Medicaid Plan to allow for peer support providers as a provider type eligible for Medi-Cal payments.

A peer support specialist is: 1) a person who has or has had a primary diagnosis of mental illness, substance use disorder, or both; or 2) a family member or caretaker of an individual experiencing mental illness and/or substance use disorders, and who uses their real-life experience to provide individualized support, coaching, and education to others. Studies indicate that peer support specialists help to reduce hospitalizations, improve client functioning, reduce family concerns, alleviate depression and other symptoms, and enhance client self-advocacy.

The Federal Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) recognizes peer support services as an evidence-based mental health model of care and as an important component in a state's delivery of effective behavioral health treatment. In 2007, CMS released guidance to states for establishing peer certification programs. States that meet the guidelines may seek a Federal Medicaid waiver or submit a state plan amendment to receive Federal matching

reimbursements for certified peer support services. SB 906 would establish a peer certification program in California, consistent with CMS guidance.

The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (DMH) reports that it uses peer and family members to provide support services for its mental health clients. According to DMH, peer counselors help to improve treatment outcomes and to facilitate the integration of health, mental health, and substance abuse services. DMH indicates that SB 906 would establish standardized training, practice guidelines, and clinical supervision requirements for peer and family support specialists that would meet the standards set by CMS. This would professionalize the peer support specialists and would enable the State to draw down additional Federal funding for these services.

I urge the Committee's "AYE" vote on SB 906. Please call me at (916) 441-7888 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Donna Seitz
Acting Chief Legislative Representative

c: Senator Jim Beall
Senator Joel Anderson
Each Member and Consultant,
Senate Health Committee