

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR [LINDSEY P. HORVATH]

April 9, 2024

Support for Senate Bill 1170 (Menjivar): Candidate Mental Healthcare Act of 2024

In our current political climate, candidates for public office face a new volume of hostility. A 2023 California Women’s List report on the mental health impacts of harassment faced by women candidates on the campaign trail had the following, very troubling, findings:

- Women running for office face disproportionate hostility compared to male counterparts:
 - Nearly two-thirds of women (65.38%) experienced harassment during their campaign.
 - Over 42% of women candidates experienced stalking at least once during their campaign compared to 27% of men.
 - Women of color and LGBTQ+ women had even higher rates of stalking—55% and 53% respectively.
- Women experienced serious mental health symptoms as a result of this hostility:
 - Nearly 2/3^{rds} of women experienced frequent or very frequent fatigue or loss of energy, or sleep disturbance; half experienced excessive anxiety or worry; and 44% of women experienced recurrent, unexpected panic attacks.
- Nearly half of the women candidates had to change their campaign strategies due to concerns about their safety and well-being.¹

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A February 2024 report by the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law found that state and local officeholders report alarming, increasing levels of threats and other abuse. Other findings include:

- Forty-three percent of state legislators experienced threats.
- Eighteen percent of local officeholders experienced threats.
- Larger shares of women than men reported increases in the severity of abuse since first taking public office.
- Women were three to four times as likely as men to experience abuse targeting their gender.
- Larger shares of women and people of color serving in local elected office experienced abuse related to their families — including their children — than did other officeholders.²

In response to the studies, State Senator Caroline Menjivar authored legislation to combat this “new normal.” SB 1170 will allow non-incumbent candidates to use campaign funds for mental healthcare. The bill considers the realities that current and future candidates are facing, and provides a tool to make getting the help they need more accessible. Mental health services are not and cannot be a luxury but part of standard health care and preventative medicine. As our politics further divide and polarize, these services are needed more than ever. Additionally, the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco in March 2024 adopted a resolution of support for SB 1170.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors express support for Senate Bill 1170 (Menjivar), which would allow non-incumbent candidates running for political office to use campaign funds for campaign-related mental health care services.

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