



March 18, 2021

The Honorable Steven Glazer
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 5108
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 21 (Glazer) Specialized license plates: mental health awareness – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Glazer,

On behalf of the California State Association of Psychiatrists, I write in support of your SB 21 (Glazer), which would create the Mental Health Awareness License Plate, a specialized license plate through the Department of Motor Vehicles, which would generate funding for mental health services in public schools.

Youth anxiety, depression, and suicide are serious social and public health concerns. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people ages 10-24 in the United States.

According to a recent state audit, the number of youth suicides per year has increased by 15 percent from 2009 to 2018. In this same time period, instances of self-harm increased by 50 percent. COVID-19 has only exacerbated this issue, with mental health related emergency room visits of teenagers rising by 31% in 2020 compared to 2019.

This bill would require the Department of Education to apply to the Department of Motor Vehicles to sponsor a mental health awareness license plate program. The fees from this specialized license plate will go into a Mental Health Awareness Fund, which will be used for mental health services in public schools. Specifically, these funds will be used to develop and promote wellness center tool kits for school districts and sites in California in order to increase awareness and reduce the stigma associated with mental illness. Standardized wellness centers will help deliver consistent services to all communities regardless of socio-economic factors.

This license plate is one small step to bringing greater awareness to mental health and greater funding for the programs and services that help Californians dealing with a mental illness.

For these reasons, the California State Association of Psychiatrists is pleased to support SB 21. Thank you for your authorship of this measure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Yoder', is placed below the word 'Sincerely,'.

Paul J. Yoder
Legislative Advocate

CC: Chair & Members, Senate Transportation Committee

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