



March 11, 2021

The Honorable Susan Eggman  
California State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 4052  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: SB 507 (Eggman) Mental health services: assisted outpatient treatment – Support**

Dear Senator Eggman,

On behalf of the California State Association of Psychiatrists, I write in support of your SB 507, which would update the eligibility requirements for Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) programs to include individuals who have cycled through multiple short-term holds as well as those who have recently left conservatorships.

Last year, the State Auditor found that individuals exiting involuntary holds had not been enrolled consistently in subsequent care to help them transition safely into the community while staying connected to vital resources. About one in four individuals placed on conservatorships cycle back to restrictive settings, despite having successfully recovered their abilities to provide for basic needs at the time their conservatorships ended. Changing the eligibility requirements by including a person's treatment history and current behavior would allow counties to offer step-down programs that would provide continued treatment and care to those individuals who would benefit the most from AOT.

In 2002, California enacted "Laura's Law," which allows judges to order AOT for people with severe mental illness if they have a history of being jailed, hospitalized, or a danger to themselves or others. The law was implemented after Laura Wilcox, a college student working with individuals with mental illnesses, was killed in 2001 by an individual with an untreated mental illness.

In order to qualify for AOT, under current law, a person must meet many requirements, including:

- Suffering from a serious mental illness,
- There has been a clinical determination that the person is unlikely to survive safely in the community without supervision,
- The person has a history of lack of compliance with treatment,

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- The person has been offered an opportunity to participate in a treatment plan but failed to engage in the treatment,
- The person's condition is substantially deteriorating,
- AOT would be the least restrictive placement,
- AOT is needed in order to prevent a relapse or deterioration that would likely result in serious harm.

The criteria that a person be substantially deteriorating essentially prohibits those exiting more restrictive treatment settings from accessing AOT, even though they may benefit from the services.

SB 507 would clarify that when a person's treatment history and current behavior make it reasonably likely they are at significant risk for deterioration, they are eligible for an AOT program. The bill does not remove any criteria, but requires that the participant meet one of two potentially contradictory criteria. This bill will also allow appearances before the court for testimony by an examining mental health professional or the subject of a petition to be conducted by videoconferencing means and requires the examiner to address the issue of whether the defendant has the capacity to give informed consent regarding psychotropic medication.

For these reasons, the California State Association of Psychiatrists is pleased to support SB 507. Thank you for your authorship of this measure.

Sincerely,



Paul J. Yoder  
Legislative Advocate

CC: Chair & Members, Senate Health Committee  
Chair & Members, Senate Judiciary Committee  
Chair & Members, Senate Appropriations Committee