



March 9, 2021

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

Re: SB 516 (Eggman) Certification for intensive treatment: review hearing – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Eggman,

On behalf of the California State Association of Psychiatrists, I write in support of your SB 516, which would amend Section 5256.2 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to public social services, by allowing evidence presented in support of a 5250 certification review hearing to include information regarding the person's medical condition and how that condition bears on certifying the person as a danger to themselves or to others or is gravely disabled.

Current law rightfully protects personal freedoms and self-determination when it comes to mental health treatment. However, some cases do not allow appropriate intervention on behalf of the welfare of people who suffer from a severe mental illness and are incapable of assessing their own medical condition. Poor nutrition, exposure to the elements, injuries from accidents and altercations, and inadequate access to proper hygiene leave many people experiencing severe mental illness with serious physical ailments. Failure to provide adequate medical treatment results in further physical harm or death before releasing an individual from a temporary hold.

When surveyed, psychiatrists identified that they often felt they had to release patients that no longer met the current criteria for a hold, although the patient was so disabled by a severe mental illness that they lacked the capacity to manage their health issues and seek sufficient medical care. The failure in the law to specifically address this means patients suffering from a debilitating mental illness miss the opportunity to receive adequate and extended medical care while receiving treatment for their mental health condition.

Unfortunately, those experiencing severe mental illness in our communities cycle through a revolving door of crisis intervention, stabilization, incarceration or hospitalization, and release. A shortage of services has resulted in a rise of more mentally ill persons in jails than hospitals or parked in emergency rooms awaiting an available bed. County jails and emergency rooms are not equipped with the proper resources, nor were they designed to evaluate and treat the mentally ill. Short-term involuntary treatment is available only to stabilize the individual and often does not provide an ample amount of time for a patient to get treatment and medication for their physical condition.

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There is no question that we must do more to invest in community resources and provide early intervention. SB 516 seeks to support individuals that face serious health risks by ensuring that they have the opportunity and resources to manage medical issues that are or *can* become complicated and acute without medical treatment.

For these reasons, the California State Association of Psychiatrists is pleased to support SB 516. Thank you for your authorship of this measure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Yoder", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Paul J. Yoder
Legislative Advocate

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