



July 29, 2021

The Honorable Anthony Portantino  
Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee  
State Capitol, Room 5050  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 638 (Quirk-Silva) Mental Health Services Act: early intervention and prevention programs—SUPPORT**

Dear Chairman Portantino,

On behalf of the California State Association of Psychiatrists, I write in support of AB 638 (Quirk-Silva), which would amend the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) by including in the prevention and early intervention services authorized to be provided, prevention and early intervention strategies that address mental health needs, substance misuse or substance use disorders, or needs relating to co-occurring mental health and substance use services.

Mental health disorders are among the most common health conditions faced by Californians. Nearly 1 in 6 California adults experience a mental illness of some kind, and 1 in 24 have a serious mental illness that makes it difficult to carry out major life activities. Additionally, 1 in 13 children have an emotional disturbance that limits participation in daily activities. Left untreated, these illnesses impact quality of life and survival.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected children and adults in unprecedented ways. Anxiety, depression, isolation, and feelings of despair as well as suicide attempts have increased dramatically among adults, school-aged children, and young adults. Many who had underlying or diagnosed mental health and substance use disorders are now dealing with an increased need for services and treatment.

Drug-related overdose fatalities have risen 50% since 2017 and is one of the top-ten leading causes of death in our State. Overdose-related deaths are rising higher in California than in the United States and vary significantly across counties and demographic groups.

Last year, AB 2265, which clarified that counties can treat patients with mental health and co-occurring substance use disorders under MHSA, was signed into law. This was an important first step to remove programmatic barriers in serving these individuals with co-occurring and substance use disorders, but the reality of the COVID-19 pandemic has amplified the need to do more.

1415 L Street, Suite 1000  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
(916) 446-4656

AB 638 builds upon last year's strides in addressing the complex needs and services of those with co-occurring issues by expanding the Mental Health Services Act to include prevention and early intervention services to be provided under the Act.

For all these reasons, the California State Association of Psychiatrists is pleased to support AB 638 and would like to urge your aye vote on this measure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Yoder", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Paul J. Yoder  
Legislative Advocate

CC: Members, Senate Appropriations Committee  
Assemblymember Sharon Quirk-Silva