



September 17, 2021

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol, First Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: SB 48 (Limon) Medi-Cal: annual cognitive health assessment – REQUEST FOR SIGNATURE

Dear Governor Newsom,

On behalf of the California State Association of Psychiatrists (CSAP), I respectfully request your signature on SB 48 (Limon), which creates an innovative program to give Medi-Cal providers training, validated assessment tools, and payment incentives for conducting cognitive health assessments in order to achieve the statewide goal of improved Alzheimer's detection and diagnosis.

Alzheimer's disease is a growing public health crisis. According to the Department of Public Health, deaths in California due to Alzheimer's increased 243% from 2000 to 2015, and in 2015 Alzheimer's was the third leading cause of death. The over-65 population in California is projected to grow to 8.6 million by 2030, and without an effective treatment or cure, the impact of Alzheimer's will only continue to rise.

According to the Alzheimer's Association, less than half of individuals living with Alzheimer's have been given a diagnosis. This leads to a number of challenges related to planning, care, cost of care, and engagement in clinical trials. While the State has funded the development of tools to help primary care providers diagnose Alzheimer's, the challenges in receiving a timely and accurate diagnosis continue to persist.

While there is currently cognitive screening reimbursement available for Medicare patients, only 20.5% of California Medicare beneficiaries have received this benefit, based on 2018 data. Furthermore, while the majority of Californians over 65 are Medicare beneficiaries, nearly 170,000 Californians over 65 only have access to Medi-Cal, and not Medicare, resulting in a significant gap in access to cognitive health assessment.

The State has modeled how such a program could be successful through Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). The program provides financial incentives for physicians serving a Medi-Cal population to conduct ACEs screenings. SB 48 would model this approach for Alzheimer's and dementia.

Receiving a diagnosis of Alzheimer's is a somber yet critical step in the journey of living with the disease. It is an opportunity for an individual, and those they care for, to finally understand what they are facing. Practically, this diagnosis is a first step in accessing crucial services, including care planning. However, for too many Californians, this step never occurs.

There is a critical need for increased diagnosis. Part of helping individuals receive a timely and accurate diagnosis is giving physicians the tools to effectively assess a patient's chances of having Alzheimer's and Dementia. SB 48 is an important step to ensure individuals receive a timely and accurate diagnosis while giving physicians the tools to effectively assess a patient's chances of having Alzheimer's and Dementia.

For these reasons, the California State Association of Psychiatrists is pleased to support SB 48 (Limon) and requests your signature on this measure.

Sincerely,

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

Paul J. Yoder
Legislative Advocate

CC: Senator Monique Limon