



March 21, 2022

The Honorable Janet Nguyen
California State Assembly
1021 O Street, Suite 5330
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 738 (Nguyen) Mental Health Boards: Veteran Representatives – SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Nguyen,

On behalf of the California State Association of Psychiatrists (CSAP), I write in support of your AB 738.

A recent survey revealed startling data showing a widening disparity in veterans receiving mental health care resources or services. As reported, approximately 85% of veterans reported some form of a substance use disorder, 53% reported having general mental illness or condition, and 26% reported having a severe mental illness and were receiving no treatments or care. Between 2008 and 2019, there was a notable spike in severe mental illness reported in veterans between the ages of 26-49.

While the stigma around mental health is slowly fading, the reality of the situation for many Californians is becoming more apparent and dire. The COVID-19 pandemic and the pandemic related shutdowns of schools, businesses, and more, has exacerbated the mental health concerns of many Californians across the State. These pressures can have an outsized impact on many people who may not know where to turn to for help or how to deal with stress, depression, anxiety, or other distress symptoms. For those affected, including our veteran population, finding resources available to them can be challenging.

AB 738 would require that a veteran or veteran advocate be appointed to a local public mental health board. By doing so, it will help ensure that our veterans are part of the conversation on mental health and wellness. Evolving perceptions of the issue have allowed more people to seek help, making it imperative that those who want help are able to get it.

For these reasons, CSAP supports AB 738. Thank you for your authorship of this measure.

Sincerely,

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

Paul Yoder
Legislative Advocate