



March 23, 2022

The Honorable Lena Gonzalez  
California State Senate  
1021 O St., Ste. 7720  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 1019 (Gonzalez) Mental Health Services Access and Awareness — SUPPORT**

Dear Senator Gonzalez,

On behalf of the California State Association of Psychiatrists (CSAP), I write in support of your SB 1019. This bill would require Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans (MCPs) to conduct annual outreach and provide culturally and linguistically relevant education and materials to members and primary care physicians on a plan beneficiary's right to timely mental health services under their Medi-Cal plan, how to find a provider, and how to seek assistance with navigating mental health services.

Roughly one in five Medi-Cal beneficiaries will encounter mental health symptoms in a given year, and the ongoing global pandemic has only exacerbated the extraordinary need for mental health services. This is especially true in BIPOC communities, which were hit the hardest by COVID-19. While access to mental health services is critical and timely for all Medi-Cal members, there are still significant racial disparities present in the utilization of MCP mental health services. According to the California Health Care Foundation, Asian and Pacific Islander and Latino Medi-Cal enrollees access mental health services at the lowest rates of all ethnic groups, and access in the LGBTQ communities is so low that data is not even publicly available.

Under SB 1019, Medi-Cal managed care plans (MCPs) will be required to develop and conduct outreach and education annually to members and providers regarding the mental health benefits covered and track granular data that provides information for underrepresented racial or ethnic communities to better understand why disparities exist in order to improve outcomes. The pandemic has ignited a sense of urgency among all stakeholders. Now more than ever, California must harness this momentum by informing communities of color of their rights to mental health, while pushing systemic changes within mental health in Medi-Cal managed care health plans.

For these reasons, CSAP is pleased to support SB 1019 and would like to thank you for your authorship.

Sincerely,

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

Paul Yoder  
Legislative Advocate

CC: Chair & Members, Senate Health Committee