

April 9, 2018

The Honorable Lorena Gonzalez Fletcher
Chair, Assembly Committee on Appropriations
State Capitol, Room 2114
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 2018 (Maienschein) Mental health workforce planning: loan forgiveness, loan repayment, and scholarship programs. - SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Gonzalez Fletcher:

On behalf of the Monterey County Board of Supervisors, we are pleased to support AB 2018 (Maienschein) which adds psychiatric trainees who have committed to working in county mental health plans or county mental health plan contracted services to the list of healthcare providers eligible to participate in the Steven M. Thompson Physician Corps Loan Repayment Program (STLRP).

According to state records 23 of California's 58 counties have fewer than one psychiatrist per 10,000 residents, while six counties have no psychiatrists at all, and the shortage has created critical weaknesses in our public mental health care delivery system that counties are struggling to patch by expanding the roles of other categories of workers, such as physician assistants, nurse practitioners, and peer providers. Monterey County agrees with Assmbllymember Maienschein that a lasting solution requires a more substantive fix that revitalizes the field of psychiatry and must include a powerful incentive to steer promising students into careers in community psychiatry, ensuring our most vulnerable residents have access to quality psychiatric care.

AB 2018 would specifically:

- 1) Change the definition of "practice setting" within the STLRP to include a program or facility operated by, or contracted to, a county mental health plan.
- 2) Revise the guidelines for selection and placement of STLRP applicants to include providing early loan repayment consideration for psychiatric trainees who have committed to working in county mental health plans or county mental health plan contracted services and are enrolled in specialized community psychiatry training tracks or fellowships for this purpose.
- 3) Clarify that the Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development (OSHPD) will include expansion plans for loan forgiveness and scholarship programs offered in return for a commitment to employment in California's public mental health system as part of its five year mental health education and training development plan.

For these reasons, we urge your Aye vote on AB 2018 (Maienschein).

Sincerely,

Luis A. Alejo
Chair, Board of Supervisors

cc: The Honorable Brian Maienschein, California State Assembly
Members, Assembly Committee on Appropriations
Lisa Murawski, Principal Consultant, Assembly Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Bill Monning, California State Senate
The Honorable Anthony Cannella, California State Senate
The Honorable Anna Caballero, California State Assembly
The Honorable Mark Stone, California State Assembly
California State Association of Counties