



May 22, 2020

Assembly Member Gonzalez, Chair
Assembly Appropriations Committee
State Capitol, Room 2114

RE: AB 2112 (Ramos) – Office of Suicide Prevention – SUPPORT

Dear Assembly Member Gonzalez and Assembly Appropriations Committee,

Mental Health America of California is pleased to support AB 2112, a bill that creates a statewide Office of Suicide Prevention within the Department of Public Health to study and address the crisis of suicide.

MHAC is the state's leading community based nonprofit dedicated to addressing the needs of those living with mental illness and promoting the overall health of all Americans. MHAC was founded in 1957 and has six affiliates in the State. Mental Health America of California has long sought to promote behavioral health as a critical part of overall wellness and to advocate on behalf of those experiencing mental health conditions.

The State and Legislature have taken a variety of steps to improve access to mental healthcare and improved mental health outcomes. This includes the creation of the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission, an independent state agency established in 2004 by voter-approved Proposition 63, the Mental Health Services Act. In their 2019 report on California's strategic plan for suicide prevention from 2020 to 2025, the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (MHSOAC) made a variety of recommendation to improve policies and outcomes statewide. In their recommendations, the MHSOAC recommended that the state develop an Office of Suicide Prevention to create visible, state-level leadership on suicide prevention.

Furthermore, the Legislature has made significant strides in suicide prevention. Even so, risk of suicide and self-harm remains an issue across our state. Suicide risk is especially acute among adolescents, older adults, veterans, and LGBTQ youth and adults. While resources have been allocated to address this crisis, coordination of state resources has remained a challenge.

This bill takes a vital step in addressing the crisis of youth suicide by coordinating state resources into a statewide Office of Suicide Prevention. This Office will devote resources to studying this crisis, make recommendations to the legislature, and advise on best practices to ensure that statewide resources are used to properly affect the crisis. By creating a statewide Office of Suicide Prevention, the legislature can target specific populations with greatest suicide risk to begin to address the root causes of the crisis.

For the reasons outlined, we respectfully urge your support of AB 2112 (Ramos).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Heidi L. Strunk', is written over a blue scribbled line.

Heidi L. Strunk
President & CEO

www.mhac.org