



March 21, 2023

The Honorable Jacqui Irwin
California State Assembly
1021 O St., Suite 6220
Sacramento CA 95814

Subject: SUPPORT for AB 1437 (Irwin)

Dear Assembly Member Irwin:

Mental Health America of California is pleased to **SUPPORT** Assembly Bill 1437 (Irwin), legislation that will improve access to crucial serious mental illness medications for Medi-Cal patients by removing unnecessary prescription reauthorization barriers.

Mental Health America of California (MHAC) is a peer-run organization that has been leading the state in behavioral health public policy and advocacy since 1957. The mission of MHAC is to ensure that people of all ages, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, language, race, ethnicity, national origin, immigration status, spirituality, religion, age or socioeconomic status who require mental health services and supports are able to live full and productive lives, receive the mental health services and other services that they need, and are not denied any other benefits, services, rights, or opportunities based on their need for mental health services. Along these lines, we support efforts which increase access to voluntary, culturally responsive, community-based behavioral health services.

It is estimated that more than 5 million Californians have a mental health condition, with over 1.3 million adults facing serious mental health challenges. Early access to mental health services and supports is vital to improving the lives of people living with mental health challenges.

Current reauthorization procedures delay people with mental health challenges, who are covered under Medi-Cal, from receiving medication without first having the prescriber get authorization before the medicine can be dispensed. This barrier increases the likelihood of negative outcomes such as emergency room visits, hospitalizations, being unhoused, suicidal ideation, or incarceration.

Assembly Bill 1437 would allow access to much needed medication for people with mental health challenges faster and more efficiently. It improves their quality of life by supporting a full, independent, and productive lifestyle by eliminating barriers to mental health medication access when a person seeks behavioral healthcare.

For these reasons, we **SUPPORT** AB 1437. If you or your staff have any questions, or would like assistance with this or any other bill, please do not hesitate to contact

www.mhac.org

me at hstrunk@mhac.org, or our Interim Director of Public Policy, Karen Vicari at kvicari@mhacofca.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping, slanted strokes that form a cursive-like shape.

Heidi Strunk
President & CEO
Mental Health America of California