



March 22, 2023

The Honorable Brian Maienschein
State Assembly
1021 O St., Suite 6220
Sacramento CA 95814

Subject: SUPPORT for AB 456 (Maienschein)

Dear Assembly Member Maienschein:

Mental Health America of California is pleased to **SUPPORT** Assembly Bill 456 (Maienschein), legislation which would require California State University (CSU) and California Community Colleges (CCC) campuses and request University of California (UC) campuses to establish a campus mental health hotline.

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.

MHAC firmly believes that providing mental health services and supports to college students not only improves student success and campus life, but also student mental health. Between 2018 and 2020 the suicide rate for youth ages 15-24 in California was 8.7 per 100,000. We must do everything we can to reduce these startling statistics. While many campuses, in their respective systems, already provide mental health services and supports, there are campuses that do not provide mental health services, leaving many students without a support system during a time of crisis.

Assembly Bill 456 will help close the equity gap for a vulnerable age group with little to no access to mental health services. Our institutions of higher learning build communities on their campus to foster a supportive environment for personal development and educational success. Ensuring access to a mental health hotline in a time of crisis provides the greatest access to community based behavioral health services for this age group.

For these reasons, we **SUPPORT** AB 456. If you or your staff have any questions, or if Mental Health America of California can be of any assistance on this or any other behavioral health bill, please do

www.mhac.org

not hesitate to contact me at hstrunk@mhac.org, or our Interim Director of Public Policy, Karen Vicari at kvicari@mhacofca.org.

In Community,



Heidi Strunk
President & CEO
Mental Health America of California