

March 23, 2023

The Honorable Susan Talamantes Eggman
California's Senate District 5
1021 O Street, Suite 8530
Sacramento, CA 95814



RE: SB 282 (Eggman) – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Eggman:

I write on behalf of Mental Health America of California in support of your Senate Bill 282 which will require Medi-Cal to reimburse providers for mental health services they provide to people, even if the mental health services are provided on the same day that person receives primary care services. Under current law California doesn't allow Medi-Cal to reimburse for same day access to services, even when both a primary care and mental health visit are needed by a patient.

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.

According to the American Psychological Association, when patients receive treatment in primary care by a physician, only 10% will follow up on a referral to a mental health provider that is not co-located. This is especially true in lower income or more remote communities, where taking time off work and arranging transportation for in-person visits can become an insurmountable challenge. We also know that patients, especially those who are Black, Indigenous or people of color experience cultural norms and stigma that leads some to believe that mental health visits are less important and not needed, making it unlikely that the patient will return on a different day for their mental health visit. The ability to seamlessly coordinate care and create warm hand offs from a primary care provider to a mental health specialist on the same day, has proven highly effective in ensuring patients have access to care and will follow through with the recommended treatment.

SB 282 will ensure that people have access to timely mental health interventions in the primary care setting. This in turn will increase access to mental health care, improve outcomes, and save money in the long run.

For these reasons MHAC is proud to support SB 282 (Eggman).

If you have any questions, or if MHAC can be of assistance on this or any other

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behavioral health bill, please reach out to me or to our Interim Public Policy Director,
Karen Vicari (kvicari@mhaofca.org)

Sincerely,

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

Heidi Strunk
President & CEO

cc: Senate Health Committee Members