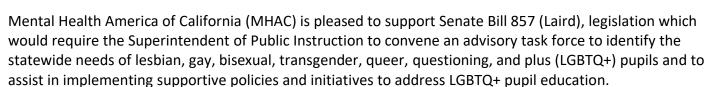
March 29, 2023

The Honorable John Laird California State Senate 1021 O Street, Suite 8720 Sacramento, CA 95814

Phone: (916) 651-4017

RE: Support for SB 857 (Laird)

Dear Senator Laird:



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.

When curriculum, policy, strategic plans, or general decision-making in education occurs, it is important we take into consideration the perspectives of our most underserved and disproportionately impacted communities. Providing a space to be a part of the decision-making process guarantees the inclusion of those perspectives in the process. For our LGBTQ+ community, many supports and services don't provide adequate care or address basic needs to live full and productive lives. SB 857 not only works to identify what those needs are for this community, but requires the LGBTQ+ community to be a part of the task force which is making the identifications and recommendations.

For these reasons, we support Senate Bill 857. 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 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

Mental Health A