



March 22, 2017

Senator Ed Hernandez, O.D., Ed, Chair
California Senate Committee on Health
State Capitol, Room 2191
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: **SUPPORT SB 374 (Newman D)** - *Health Insurance: Discriminatory Practices: Mental Health*

Dear Chair Dr. Hernandez:

The California Coalition for Mental Health provides a single unified voice for mental health organization with a statewide advocacy presence. Our members include family and consumer organizations, clinicians, nonprofit service providers, professional guilds and associations, hospitals, and others who seek to improve the delivery of mental health care in California. Our members have many critical issues of concern, including creating better access to care and assuring parity in the delivery of mental health services that are on par with other health care services.

While existing state law requires every policy of disability insurance that covers hospital, medical, or surgical expenses in this state to provide coverage for the diagnosis and medically necessary treatment of severe mental illnesses of a person of any age, and of serious emotional disturbances of a child, and the federal Mental Health Parity and Addiction Act of 2008 places further requirements on insurers, regulatory oversight and guidance is critical to ensure compliance. This bill would reaffirm the authority of the Insurance Commissioner to enforce parity in all segments of the market, provide greater transparency to the public, and guidance to health insurers.

Surgeon General David Satcher, MD seminal report in 1999 on the stigma of mental health highlighted the impact of stigma in deterring the public from wanting to pay for the care of valid, treatable health conditions which reduces consumers' access to resources and opportunities for treatment and social services. SB 374 (Newman D) provides the oversight and guidance needed to ensure that needed care of valid, treatable health conditions.

We ask for your **AYE** vote on SB 374 (Newman D). Please contact me if you should have questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JR", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Joseph Robinson, LCSW
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