



February 27, 2023

The Honorable Chris Holden
California State Assembly
State Capitol
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0041

RE: SUPPORT AB 289 (Holden) – Mental Health Services Act

Dear Assembly Member Holden:

On behalf of the California Youth Empowerment Network (CAYEN), I write to express our strong support for AB 289 (Holden), which would require youth and youth mental health organizations to be added to the list of stakeholders who must be included in discussions with counties as they develop their Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) three-year plans and annual updates.

The California Youth Empowerment Network (CAYEN) is a youth-led statewide network comprised of TAY Action Teams and CAYEN Board members which engages, empowers and represents Transitional Age Youth (TAY) in mental health advocacy on issues that directly affect TAY. We envision a community in which TAY in need of behavioral health services have access to resources and support so they can lead self-fulfilling lives and be contributing members of society.

The Mental Health Services Act, passed by voters in 2004 as Proposition 63, imposes a 1% tax on incomes over \$1 million in California, and dedicates this funding to increasing behavioral health services in every California County. Two key principles of the MHSA are local control and extensive stakeholder involvement in planning, implementation, and evaluation of MHSA programs and services.

Each county has different community needs, demographics, and service gaps. Extensive stakeholder involvement in the development of county MHSA 3-year plans and annual updates is essential to ensure that programs meet the unique needs of each community. Children and youth require behavioral health services that are separate and unique from services designed for adults. For this reason, it is vital that counties are required to incorporate the voice of youth and youth mental health organizations at county MHSA planning meetings.

For these reasons, CAYEN is in strong support of AB 289. If you have any questions and or if CAYEN can be of any assistance on this or any other behavioral health bill, please contact me or our Interim Director of Public Policy Karen Vicari at kvicari@mhaofca.org.

In Community,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Heidi L. Strunk".

Heidi L. Strunk
President & CEO
California Youth Empowerment Network