

March 28, 2024

The Honorable Kevin McCarty
Chair, Assembly Committee on Public Safety
California State Assembly
1020 N Street, Room 111
Sacramento, CA 95814



Subject: Support for AB 2142 (Haney)

Dear Assemblymember McCarty,

The California Youth Empowerment Network (CAYEN) is pleased to support AB 2142 (Haney), legislation which would create a pilot program at select prisons to ensure that behavioral health therapy is accessible to incarcerated people who do not have a California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) severe mental health disorder classification. As a result, this bill would increase access to behavioral health services to individuals not currently eligible to receive them.

The California Youth Empowerment Network is a youth-led statewide network comprised of TAY Action Teams and CAYEN Board members which engages, empowers and represents Transitional Age Youth (TAY), ages 15-26, in mental health advocacy on issues that directly affect TAY. Since CAYEN's inception in 2006, CAYEN has taken many forms of action to empower TAY in their personal lives and spark progressive change in public policy. Everyone, even TAY who are justice involved, has a right to mental or behavioral health services that could prevent self-harm, improve wellness, and reduce recidivism.

In a 2022 CDCR report, 5% of incarcerated individuals who died by suicide were aged 18 to 25.¹ This percentage rises to 57% among those aged 25 to 44. Prevention and early intervention services can play a crucial role in reducing the incidence of suicide among justice-involved individuals, especially considering that 65% of suicides occur within the first 10 years of incarceration. Therefore, enhancing access to mental and behavioral health services will benefit individuals' long term and reduce the number of suicides.

Additionally, 75% of serious mental health challenges begin before the age of 25.² Given that incarcerated TAY

¹ 2022 annual report on suicides and suicide prevention ... (n.d.). <https://cchcs.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/60/2022-Annual-Report.pdf>

² California, S. of. (2024, March 21). Early psychosis intervention plus. MHSOAC. <https://mhsaac.ca.gov/initiatives/early-psychosis-intervention-plus/>

often have a history that includes Adverse Childhood Experiences and other trauma, it is essential that mental health services be made available and accessible to incarcerated TAY who request those services.



CAYEN

For these reasons, we support AB 2142 and ask for your “Aye” vote. If you or your staff have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at dthirakul@mhac.org or our Director of Public Policy, Karen Vicari at kvicari@mhacofca.org.

In Community,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "D. Thirakul", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Danny Thirakul
Public Policy Coordinator
California Youth Empowerment Network