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May 28, 2024

The Honorable Richard Roth, Chair  
Senate Health Committee  
1021 O Street, Room 3310  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Support for AB 2703 (Aguiar-Curry)—Federally qualified health centers and rural health clinics: psychological associates**

Dear Chair Roth,

Local Health Plans of California (“LHPC”) is writing in support of Assembly Bill 2703 (Aguiar-Curry) which would expand access to mental healthcare in FQHCs and RHCs by allowing Associate Psychologists to work in these clinics, and for those clinics to be reimbursed for the services they provide. As the statewide trade association representing all 17 of California’s non-for-profit and community-based health plans, which collectively cover 70% of the state’s Medi-Cal managed care enrollees or nearly 9.3 million Californians, we understand the pressing need to expand the behavioral health workforce in order to address the behavioral health needs of Medi-Cal members.

AB 2703 would allow psychological associates to work in FQHCs or RHCs and for those healthcare facilities to be reimbursed for the services psychological associates provide. Under this bill Associates would need to be registered with the Board of Psychology and services would be billed under their licensed psychologist supervisor.

Psychological Associates are individuals who have completed a doctoral degree and are registered with the Board of Psychology while earning the 3,000 supervised clinical hours required for psychology licensure. These hours can be difficult to complete because it can be hard to find a location and healthcare employer willing to bring them on, which often delays licensure. Current law does not allow FQHCs or RHCs to be reimbursed for services provided by Psychological Associates. This has significantly limited training opportunities for future psychologists particularly those interested in working in public health or community-based settings.

Mirroring the success of SB 966 (Limon) Chapter 607 of 2022, which allowed FQHCs and RHCs to bill for the services of associate marriage and family therapists and associate clinical social workers, AB 2703 will expand timely

access to crucial mental and behavioral health services for safety net patients and give FQHCs and RHCs the opportunity to hire more behavioral health providers while the state is facing a massive shortage of professionals who provide this care. Additionally, this bill would also make it much more likely that psychologists stay at FQHCs and RHCs after they become licensed, increasing the availability of care for the most vulnerable Californians in the long term and ensuring FQHCs and RHCs can better meet the needs of their communities.

For these reasons LHPC strongly supports AB 2703 (Aguilar-Curry) and respectfully requests your “aye” vote to ensure expanded access to behavioral healthcare for California’s most vulnerable communities.

Sincerely,

*Katie Andrew*

Katie Andrew  
Director of Government Affairs  
Local Health Plans of California

cc:

Assemblymember Aguilar-Curry  
Members, Senate Health Committee