

May 17, 2017

The Honorable Dr. Richard Pan, Chair
The Honorable Bill Monning
The Honorable Jeff Stone
Senate Subcommittee No. 3 on Health and Human Services,
State Capitol, Room 4070
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Children's Mental Health Crisis Services – Oppose Proposed Funding Reduction

Dear Senate Subcommittee No. 3:

The undersigned organizations care deeply about the mental health of children and youth in California, and we oppose the Governor's \$17 million proposed reduction in funding for SB 833 (statutes 2016) which was designed to establish a continuum of mental health crisis services for children and youth.

Currently, California lacks adequate and appropriate mental health crisis services for children and youth. In fact, according to a draft Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (OAC) report, no county in California has successfully built out the full continuum of services required to fully meet the needs of children and families in crisis.

To help address this issue, the 2016-17 State budget included \$28 million administered by CHFFA (\$11 million MHSA and \$17 million general Funds) as a one-time investment to support the start-up of crisis continuum of care services for children and youth, through budget trailer bill SB 833. The continuum of services to be developed includes crisis stabilization, mobile crisis support teams, crisis residential treatment, and family respite care. An additional \$2 million in MHSA funds will be administered by MHSOAC for triage services.

This \$30 million investment would help bring California into compliance with Federal Medicaid requirements for the provision of all medically necessary services to beneficiaries, and with State and Federal Parity laws, which require behavioral health services on par with physical health care. It would also reduce costs for hospitalization, out of home care, and law enforcement involvement. More importantly, this funding would decrease the human and fiscal costs of inappropriately treated mental illness in children and youth, and help improve the short and long term outcomes for children and youth experiencing a mental health crisis.

However, the Governor's 2017-18 January budget proposal would eliminate the \$17 million general fund portion to establish this lifesaving continuum of services. Despite diverse stakeholder advocacy for restoration of this funding, the Governor did not include it in the May Revision.

Without crisis services, children and youth suffer dire consequences including self-harm and suicide. The lack of adequate mobile crisis response services frequently leave families and schools with no choice but to call 911 when a child or youth is experiencing a mental health crisis. This law enforcement response creates an unnecessary expense and yet another source of trauma during a crisis and, at times, even results in a youth's inappropriate criminalization or arrest rather than the provision of needed mental health services.

Children in crisis often are subject to unnecessary separations from their families and community simply so they can be kept safe in hospital emergency departments ill-equipped to meet their needs or in order to be moved across the state to one of the few psychiatric hospitals which serve individuals under the age of 18. Moreover, many of the children and youth transported to an emergency room during a crisis could be successfully diverted from hospitalization if appropriate crisis services existed.

Building a robust continuum of crisis services is critical to the well being of all children and youth in California, and especially so for our most traumatized youth, such as those in the child welfare system who have experienced abuse, neglect, separation, and loss.

The lack of an adequate continuum of children's crisis services threatens the success of California's Continuum of Care Reform (CCR) effort to reduce the use of congregate care settings and ensure foster children and youth are raised in loving families whenever possible. Many of the children and youth who the State and Counties are now working to move into family homes have more significant mental or behavioral health needs. Without ensuring counties can provide high-quality, community-based mental health services, including crisis services, to the youth who need them, the CCR effort could result in poor outcomes, such as failed placements and unnecessary transitions for children and youth or increased youth homelessness, runaways, psychiatric hospitalizations, or incarceration.

Until we invest in a continuum of crisis services specific to the needs of children and youth, young people in crisis and their families will continue to suffer. For these reasons, we urge you to reject the Governor's proposed reduction of \$17 million State General Funds to build a children's crisis continuum.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics, California
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles
Aspiranet
Autism Deserves Equal Coverage
California Alliance of Caregivers
California Alliance of Child and Family Services
California Children's Hospital Association
California Council of Community Behavioral Health Agencies
California Hospital Association
California Mental Health Advocates for Children and Youth
California Pan-Ethnic Health Network
California Psychiatric Association
California School Nurses Organization
California School-Based Health Alliance
California Youth Empowerment Network
Casa Pacifica Centers for Children & Families
Children Now
Children's Advocacy Institute

Children's Defense Fund - California
County Behavioral Health Directors Association of California
County Welfare Directors Association of California
Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services
Edgewood Center for Children and Families
Family Care Network, Inc.
First Place for Youth
Greater Hope Foundation
Hillsides
John Burton Advocates for Youth
Junior Blind of America
La Clinica de La Raza
Law Foundation of Silicon Valley
Lincoln
Maryvale
Maternal and Child Health Access
Mental Health & Autism Insurance Project
Mental Health America of California
National Association of Social Workers, California Chapter
National Center for Youth Law

National Foster Youth Institute
Optimist Youth Homes & Family Services
Pacific Clinics
Public Counsel
Redwood Community Services, Inc.
Redwood Quality Management Company
San Diego Center for Children
Seneca Family of Agencies
Sierra Forever Families
Stars Behavioral Health Group
Steinberg Institute
Sunny Hills Services

The Children's Partnership
The Statewide Task Force on Accessing
Health Services for California Children in
Foster Care
The Village Family Services
United Advocates for Children and Families
Uplift Family Services
WestCoast Children's Clinic
Western Center on Law & Poverty
Young Minds Advocacy
Youth Law Center

CC: Marjorie Swartz, Office of the President Pro Tempore
Jennifer Troia, Office of the President Pro Tempore
Craig Cornett, Office of the Senate President Pro Tempore
Scott Ogus, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee No. 3
Theresa Pena, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee No. 3
Kirk Feely, Senate Republican Fiscal Office
Anthony Archie, Senate Republican Fiscal Office
Luan Huynh, Office of Senator Holly Mitchell
Bernadette Lawrence, Office of Senator Richard Pan
The Honorable Joaquin Arambula, Chair, Assembly Subcommittee No. 1
Members of Assembly Subcommittee No. 1
Mark Newton, Legislative Analysts' Office
Ben Johnson, Legislative Analyst's Office
Michael Cohen, Department of Finance
Kristin Shelton, Department of Finance
Theresa Calvert, Department of Finance
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Marko Mijic, Health and Human Services Agency
Will Lightbourne, California Department of Social Services
Jennifer Kent, California Department of Health Care Services
Robert Smith, California Department of Social Services
Carol Gallegos, California Department of Health Care Services
Toby Ewing, Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission
Diane Stanton, California Health Facilities Financing Authority

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