



**California
Behavioral Health
Planning Council**

ADVOCACY • EVALUATION • INCLUSION

CHAIRPERSON
Tony Vartan

EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Jenny Bayardo

ADDRESS
P.O. Box 997413
Sacramento, CA
95899-7413

PHONE
(916) 701-8211

FAX
(916) 319-8030

MS 2706

July 14, 2025

The Honorable Nick Schultz, Chair
Assembly Public Safety Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 5150
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Opposition for SB 27 – Community Assistance, Recovery, and
Empowerment (CARE) Court Program**

Dear Assemblymember Schultz:

On behalf of the California Behavioral Health Planning Council (CBHPC), I am writing to express our opposition to Senate Bill (SB) 27 (Umberg).

The CBHPC serves as an advisory body to the Legislature and the Administration on behavioral health policies and priorities, as outlined in Welfare and Institutions Code §§ 5771 and 5772. Our diverse membership includes individuals with lived experience of serious mental illness and substance use disorders, family members, service providers, professionals, and representatives from state departments whose work intersects with California's behavioral health system. Their perspectives are essential in our evaluation of the public behavioral health system and shape the Council's recommendations.

SB 27 proposes to, among other things, expand the populations eligible under the CARE Act to include individuals with a bipolar I disorder with psychotic features. Compared to the prevalence of schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders which is between 0.33 and 0.75 percent¹, bipolar disorder affects approximately 2.8 percent of adults, with an estimated 4.4 percent who will experience bipolar disorder during their lifetime². Adding bipolar I disorder to the list of qualifying disorders would substantially expand eligibility for treatment under the CARE Act. This bill would

¹ National Institute of Mental Health. *Schizophrenia*.
<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/schizophrenia>

² National Institute of Mental Health. *Bipolar Disorder*.
<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/bipolar-disorder>



California Behavioral Health Planning Council

ADVOCACY • EVALUATION • INCLUSION

represent a fundamental shift from the original intent of the CARE Act while systems across all 58 counties continue to fully establish CARE.

Although implementation of the CARE Act commenced in seven counties in October 2023, with the eighth county in December 2023, the remaining counties have only recently begun accepting CARE petitions as of December 1, 2024. The Department of Health Care Services released the initial annual report for the CARE Act in June 2025; however, this report only covers the first months of service for the eight Cohort I counties. Due to this, current data on the efficacy of the CARE Act is incredibly limited, and the independent evaluation to be conducted pursuant to Welfare and Institutions Code § 5986 is not expected for several years. Given these circumstances, key outcomes and impacts are not yet sufficiently available to allow for a thorough evaluation of its effectiveness and long-term costs. Expanding its scope prematurely could lead to adverse consequences for our already strained public behavioral health system.

Furthermore, we are concerned about the lack of opportunity for public and stakeholder input on this bill. SB 27 was introduced with minimal provisions on December 2, 2024, and substantially amended on June 17, 2025, which did not allow for other legislators in previous committees to thoroughly assess the policy and budgetary implications. It subsequently prevented additional opportunities for stakeholder review and meaningful public input during the early stages of the legislative process.

Expanding eligibility for a framework that has yet to demonstrate effectiveness could result in unintended consequences. Instead, we believe California should prioritize investment in accessible, community-based services that are evidenced-based and proven to improve outcomes.

The Council respectfully opposes SB 27. If you have questions about our position, please contact Jenny Bayardo, Executive Officer, at (916) 750-3778 or via e-mail at Jenny.Bayardo@cbhpc.dhcs.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Tony Vartan, Chairperson



**California
Behavioral Health
Planning Council**

ADVOCACY • EVALUATION • INCLUSION

cc: The Honorable Senator Thomas Umberg
Honorable Members, Assembly Committee on Public Safety
Zach Keller, Legislative Director
Mufida Assaf, Legislative Aide