



**California
Behavioral Health
Planning Council**

ADVOCACY • EVALUATION • INCLUSION

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June 27, 2025

The Honorable Nick Schultz

Chair, Assembly Public Safety Committee

1021 O Street, Suite 5150

Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Opposition for SB 820 – Inmates: mental health.

Dear Assemblymember Schultz:

On behalf of the California Behavioral Health Planning Council (CBHPC), I am writing to express our opposition to Senate Bill (SB) 820 (Stern).

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 to our view on the challenges and successes of behavioral health services and best practices in California.

SB 820 would, among other things, expand the authority to administer psychiatric medication to defendants who have been found incompetent to stand trial without prior informed consent on an emergency basis when treatment is deemed necessary to address the emergency condition. Under the bill, emergency involuntary medication may be administered prior to a capacity hearing and continued for up to 72 hours, unless the treating physician files a petition and provides written notice to extend the period.

We acknowledge and appreciate the author's recent amendments to strike the provision allowing emergency involuntary medication to be extended for up to one year, however, the bill continues to raise serious ethical and civil rights concerns, especially for an already vulnerable population



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whose civil rights are substantially lost. Forcing medication on individuals without due process protections afforded under the law undermines fundamental legal safeguards for persons with behavioral health challenges involved in the justice system. These protections are essential to ensure that the initiation of involuntary medication is both lawful and reasonably justified.

Although current statute permits the administering of involuntary medication on rare occasions, it must remain an exception and not a standard practice, authorized only when least restrictive alternatives have been exhausted and are consistent with existing legal requirements for due process. However, even when regulated under current law, the use of forced treatment poses significant implications for ethical standards and infringes upon patients' rights to informed consent. The CBHPC does not support involuntary treatment nor any policies that expand the use of involuntary treatment, as it fundamentally undermines individual autonomy, dignity, and civil liberties.

For these reasons, the CBHPC respectfully opposes SB 820. If you have any questions, 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

cc: The Honorable Senator Henry Stern
Members, Assembly Committee on Public Safety
Zoe Guttman, Policy Analyst
Gil Topete, Legislative Director