



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

April 29, 2025

The Honorable Senator Sasha Renée Pérez

Chair, Senate Education Committee

California State Capitol, Room #6740

Sacramento, CA 95814

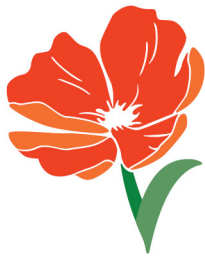
RE: **Support** for SB 531 (Rubio) – Student Mental Health Education

Dear Senator Pérez,

The California Behavioral Health Planning Council (Council) is proud to support Senate Bill 531. Pursuant to state law, the Council serves as an advisory body to the Legislature and Administration on the policies and priorities that this state should be pursuing in developing its behavioral health system. Our membership includes persons with lived experience of serious mental illness and substance use disorder, family members, professionals, providers, and representatives from state departments whose populations touch the behavioral health system. Their perspectives are essential to our view on the challenges and successes of behavioral health services and best practices in California.

Half of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by the age of 14 and worldwide, mental health challenges are the leading causes of illness and disability among young people. In California, about one-third of adolescents have experienced psychological distress. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, anxiety, behavior disorders, and depression are the most common mental health diagnoses in children with only 53% of children between 3-17 years old who received treatment or counseling from a mental health professional in the past year.

With gaps in the clinical care, treatment, and support for youth, our education systems are well-positioned to assume an integral role in educating and equipping students with the basic knowledge and vital skills for managing mental health challenges. SB 531 will amend current law to include age-appropriate mental health education within the existing



California Behavioral Health Planning Council

ADVOCACY • EVALUATION • INCLUSION

requirement that health instruction be taught in grades 1-6 and requiring mental health education to be taught in grades 7-12.

The Council believes that resilience emerges when individuals of all ages are empowered and supported to cope with life events. The Council also supports efforts that aim to reduce and eliminate stigma surrounding behavioral health.

It is for these reasons that the Council supports SB 531. If you have any questions, please contact Jenny Bayardo, Executive Officer, at (916) 750-3778 or by e-mail at Jenny.Bayardo@cbhpc.dhcs.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Tony Vartan
Chairperson

cc: The Honorable Senator Susan Rubio
Alex Hirsch, Legislative Director
California Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
California Alliance of Child and Family Services
National Center for Youth Law
National Alliance on Mental Illness