



**California
Behavioral Health
Planning Council**

ADVOCACY • EVALUATION • INCLUSION

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September 4, 2026

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 1626 (Gabriel) – REQUEST FOR SIGNATURE

Dear Governor Newsom:

On behalf of the California Behavioral Health Planning Council (CBHPC), I am writing to respectfully request your signature on Assembly Bill (AB) 1626 (Gabriel).

Public Law 102-321 requires the California Behavioral Health Planning Council to advocate for people with lived experience of serious mental illness. Under Welfare and Institutions Code §§ 5771 and 5772, we also advise the Department of Health Care Services and the Legislature on behavioral health policies and priorities. Our members include people with lived experience, family members, parents of children with serious emotional disturbances, service providers, professionals, and representatives from state departments. Their perspectives help shape our recommendations.

AB 1626 would require specified trainings for coaches to cover mental-health related topics, including, among other topics, trauma-informed care, behavioral health challenges specific to youth athletes, signs and symptoms of common behavioral health conditions in youth, and strategies of creating a positive team culture, as provided.

Worldwide, mental health challenges are the leading causes of illness and disability among young people, with half of all lifetime cases of mental illness emerging by the age of 14. Anxiety, behavior disorders, and depression are the most common mental health diagnoses among children yet only 53 percent of children between ages 3-17 receive



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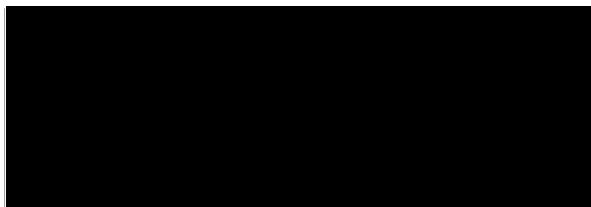
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treatment or counseling from a mental health professional in a given year¹. In California, nearly one-third of adolescents report experiencing psychological distress underscoring the critical need for early identification and accessible support.

Given that young people spend most of their day on school campuses including additional hours for those who participate in extracurricular activities, our education systems are well-positioned to assume an integral role in supporting students' well-being. While non-clinical staff such as coaches cannot provide clinical services, they are often the adults who interact with youth most consistently. This regular contact allows them to recognize early signs of behavioral health challenges and to help connect students and their families to appropriate supports available through the school or community-based organizations.

For these reasons, the CBHPC proudly supports AB 1626 and respectfully requests your signature on this important bill. 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 Assemblymember Jesse Gabriel
CA Commission on the Status of Women and Girls

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2026). *Data and statistics on children's mental health*. <https://www.cdc.gov/children-mental-health/data-research/index.html>