



California Behavioral Health Planning Council

ADVOCACY • EVALUATION • INCLUSION

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June 11, 2026

The Honorable Mia Bonta
California State Assembly
1020 N Street, Suite 390
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support and Recommendations for AB 2161 – Medi-Cal: redeterminations and work or community engagement.

Dear Assemblymember Bonta:

On behalf of the California Behavioral Health Planning Council (CBHPC), I am writing to express our support for Assembly Bill (AB) 2161 as well as our recommendations for enhancing the provisions.

As California's behavioral health planning council mandated in Public Law 102-321 to exist, we have a responsibility to advocate for persons with lived experience of serious mental illness. We also serve as an advisory body to the Department of Health Care Services and the Legislature 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, parents of children with serious emotional disturbances, service providers, professionals, and representatives from state departments whose work intersects with California's behavioral health system. These perspectives inform and shape our policy recommendations.

The CBHPC strongly supports AB 2161 and its intent to strengthen Medi-Cal eligibility processes and reducing preventable coverage loss amid forthcoming federal regulations. AB 2161 presents an opportunity to improve administrative efficiency and establish a framework that ensures individuals with behavioral health conditions can maintain coverage and access to Medi-Cal services essential to their health and recovery.



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We believe targeted enhancements would further strengthen the bill's protections for beneficiaries. While completing certification or recertification documents online may be convenient, beneficiaries may encounter issues that result in inappropriate denials or lapses in coverage. To prevent avoidable interruptions, we recommend additional assistance and safety-net measures that support beneficiaries throughout the online process and protect against administrative mistakes.

Additionally, it is important to establish contingency provisions that provide temporary funding for counties and authorize them to leverage other funding sources to maintain enrollment for eligible beneficiaries affected by administrative errors in the renewal process. This will ensure continuity of care while individuals work with their county offices to resolve the errors.

We appreciate your leadership in strengthening Medi-Cal's eligibility framework and your ongoing commitment to advancing policies that protect the health and well-being of California's most vulnerable populations as the state prepares to implement new federal requirements. With the recommended amendments, AB 2161 can more effectively safeguard beneficiaries from preventable loss of coverage and promote equitable access to essential behavioral health services.

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: Monica Sepulveda, Legislative Director
Jo Tinoco, Legislative Assistant