

PRESS RELEASE



California Association of
Health Plans

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California Association of Health Plans on Senate Bill 855 (Wiener) The Bill Misses the Mark and Threatens Quality of Mental Health Care

Sacramento, August 5, 2020 – The California Association of Health Plans today released a statement in response to Senate Bill 855 by Senator Scott Wiener following the bill’s passage by the Assembly Health Committee:

“Mental health care and parity of care are high priorities for California’s health plans. Contrary to what Senate Bill 855 intends to achieve, this legislation misses the mark on solving California’s mental health care crisis.

“First and foremost, mental health parity laws are well-established both in state and federal law. California’s health plans are working to ensure their continued compliance with these laws, including comprehensive requirements laid out by the Affordable Care Act.

“This unnecessary bill is based on a false premise that somehow health plan enrollees are not receiving mental health care services at parity with medical care, which couldn’t be further from the truth. In fact, 99.8% of enrollees currently have coverage for mental health and substance use disorder at parity with other medical conditions, including for alcohol and opioid addictions and early intervention treatment, and will not experience a change in benefit coverage under this bill.

“This bill sets into statute its own unique definition of “medical necessity” that will hamstring the ability of the provider to determine what is clinically appropriate for the individual – ultimately putting vulnerable patients at risk.

“SB 855 will also drive up premiums by millions of dollars in the first year alone. The bill also pulls critical funds from the state at a time when California is slashing spending. This cost ultimately impacts enrollees since the DMHC is funded by health plans through regulatory fees. Creating new mandates on health plans is not the solution and only drives up health care costs for everyone.

“As California grapples with the ongoing mental health and substance use crisis, it is imperative that our state has the tools and the workforce that it requires. Senate Bill 855 lacks true substance and does not address the root of the mental health care crisis. Rather, we should be ensuring our state has the tools

and the providers needed to meet the demand of California's mental health care needs. These critical solutions should come from a dedicated plan of action, built by state leaders, health plans, providers, and behavioral health advocates.

"Californians deserve more thoughtful legislation. SB 855 is not the answer California is seeking."

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CAHP is a statewide association representing 46 full-service health plans. Through legislative advocacy, education and collaboration with other member organizations, CAHP works to sustain a strong environment in which our member plans can provide access to products that offer choice and flexibility to the more than 25 million members they serve. For more information, please visit www.calhealthplans.org or call (916) 552-2910.