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California State Senate

SENATOR
DARRELL STEINBERG
SIXTH SENATORIAL DISTRICT



COMMITTEES
NATURAL RESOURCES & WATER
CHAIR
BUDGET & FISCAL REVIEW
SUBCOMMITTEE NO. 2 ON
RESOURCES, ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION & ENERGY
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
JUDICIARY
HEALTH

SELECT COMMITTEE
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

May 8, 2008

Stephen Mayberg, Ph.D.
Director
Department of Mental Health
1600 9th Street, Room 151
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Strategy for Expediting Funding for Prevention and Early Intervention Statewide Projects

Dear Dr. Mayberg,

As Chair of the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission (OAC) from July 2005 to September 2007, I helped develop and approve several Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) Statewide Projects. These projects included the Student Mental Health Initiative, Suicide Prevention, and Stigma and Discrimination Reduction, and are critical statewide efforts to improving mental health in California. Each of these projects was developed with significant stakeholder input. Unfortunately, along with many stakeholders, I expected that implementation would not take as long as it has. This letter is to show my support for a strategy that has recently come forward to expedite funding for the Student Mental Health Initiative, Suicide Prevention and Stigma and Discrimination Reduction.

Under this strategy, the Department of Mental Health (DMH) would provide each county with its share of the funds for each project and send Requests for Qualifications (RFQs) describing how the funding for each project would be used to each county and stakeholders. Counties would propose to reassign the funds back to the state for each project. After posting the letter from DMH for 30 days, the Board of Supervisors in each county would acknowledge the letter and agree to the assignment. In an estimated 49 counties that can make MHSA agreements, it would be the Board of Supervisors delegated authority that would make the actual assignment back to DMH. This process would be similar to what is being used for the MHSA Housing Program with California

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Housing Finance Agency (CalHFA). At the same time, the OAC would develop a review tool for each of the projects.

DMH would concurrently seek budgetary authority to contract for these three projects in the 2008-2009 Fiscal Year. DMH's Spring Finance Letter requested budgetary authority for \$7 million for Suicide Prevention and \$8 million for the higher education piece of the Student Mental Health Initiative (SMHI). DMH would make a supplemental request to receive and expend the necessary funds for these three projects. By my initial estimation, this supplemental request would be for:

- \$15 million for Stigma and Discrimination Reduction;
- \$6.5 million for K-12 piece of SMHI;
- \$0.5 million for evaluation of higher education piece of SMHI;
- \$3 million for Suicide Prevention to bring it to its \$10 million annual level.

I fully support this strategy to expedite funding for these three critical projects. And, I look forward to working with you to ensure swift implementation. Please do not hesitate to call on me or my staff if you feel we might be of assistance.

Sincerely,

DARRELL STEINBERG
State Senator, 6th District

Cc: Commissioners, OAC
Sheri Whitt, Executive Director, OAC