

August 14, 2020

Submitted Via Web Portal



The Honorable Anthony Portantino, Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee
State Capitol, Room 22206
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Please support AB 890

Dear Chairman Portantino,

Mental Health America of Los Angeles (MHALA) respectfully requests your support for Assembly Bill 890, which would authorize nurse practitioners (NPs) to practice to the full extent of their education and training so that more Californians receive timely care. Since the full implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) millions of Californians now have public or commercial health coverage. With the inclusion of the essential health benefits in the ACA and subsequent action taken by the California Legislature, more Californians have insurance coverage for behavioral health services, but coverage is not access. In order to meet the increased demand for behavioral health services, a sufficient workforce must be in place. AB 890 represents an important strategy, when adopted with other recommendations, to help more Californians receive timely, quality care for their needs.

MHALA provides mental health care to young adults and adult, specializing in serving those individuals who qualify for county-funded mental health services. Included in these services are the prescription of psychiatric medications and medication support. We have many years of experience with psychiatrists and nurse practitioners providing this medication support as parts of interdisciplinary teams. Recruiting and retaining qualified psychiatrists has been and continues to be a serious challenge for MHALA and every other community-based behavioral health organization in California. A recent UCSF Healthforce Center research report concluded that by 2028 California will have 50% fewer psychiatrists than needed. California must act to address this shortfall.

While increasing the use of tele-psychiatry, locum tenans and psychiatric residency slots at medial schools are important ways to help address the shortfall they are short-term and inadequate solutions. Allowing nurse practitioners to practice their full-scope authority is a long-term and practical approach that must be supported.

MHALA urges you and the Committee to endorse AB 890.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chad Costello", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Chad Costello
Vice President, Policy
MHALA

cc: The Honorable Jim Wood, California State Assembly