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CALIFORNIA WILL BECOME THE FIRST STATE IN THE COUNTRY TO PROVIDE MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS TRAINING FOR ALL 911 DISPATCHERS

(SACRAMENTO, CA) – Since the beginning of 2019, Assemblymember Kansen Chu (D-San Jose) has been working with the National Alliance on Mental Illness California (NAMI-CA) to push for better training on mental health identification for 911 dispatchers through AB 680. The Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) has decided to voluntarily implement the policy changes sought by AB 680 even though the legislation did not become enacted as law.

“This is a clear victory for good policy. I am very pleased that POST is moving forward with training as prescribed in my bill, AB 680, even though the legislation did not pass this year,” said Assemblymember Chu. “Mental health support for those in need is a priority for me, and I’m glad it’s also important to POST. Dispatchers are usually the first point of contact in a crisis, and this training will help them alert responding officers to special circumstances, such as mental health crises. I want individuals with mental health struggles to get the help they need instead of being locked up.”

AB 680 was sponsored by NAMI-CA, and the POST Commission shared that they will continue working with NAMI-CA to integrate mental health training as they update the curriculum for dispatchers. When implemented, California will be the first state in the country to provide this level of training to all 911 dispatchers as part of their basic training course curriculum.

“We are happy that POST sees the value in this training and look forward to our continued work with the agency,” said Jessica Cruz, CEO of NAMI-CA. “Families and individuals across California deserve the best supports when faced with a mental health crisis. This is a step in the right direction, and we commend POST for their leadership.”

AB 680 sought to provide emergency dispatchers with mental health awareness and identification training as part of their basic training course. As the first link to the public, 911 dispatchers play a crucial role in identifying emergencies that might involve people with mental illnesses, intellectual disabilities, or substance use disorders. Dispatchers and police can work together with mental health response teams, when available, to connect people with mental illness to appropriate care. The goal is to reduce unnecessary use of force and incarceration for people who need help. Peace officers already take similar training. Assemblymember Chu’s bill sought to include 911 dispatchers in that training.

Assemblymember Kansen Chu is proud to represent the 25th Assembly District, comprised of the cities of Fremont, Milpitas, Newark, Santa Clara, and San Jose.

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