



ASSEMBLY MEMBER

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DISTRICT 25

AB 1844

**PAID SICK LEAVE FOR
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH REASONS**

Bill Version: January 6, 2020

SUMMARY

To destigmatize behavioral health and encourage help-seeking in the work place, AB 1844 allows employees to use their paid sick leave for behavioral health reasons. Specifically, employees will be granted permission to use paid sick leave for existing or preventative behavior health conditions much like a physical illness.

BACKGROUND

In the U.S., nearly 20% of all adults ages 18 or older experience mental illnesses each year. Only 43% of those diagnosed with mental illnesses received treatment in 2018. In fact, over 10 million Americans are reported to have unmet needs for mental health treatment. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, over 70% of adults reported at least one symptom of stress, such as anxiousness, headaches, or feeling overwhelmed. In addition, suicide is the second leading cause of death among people between 15 to 34 years of age. Furthermore, many mental health disorders are tied to physical health conditions, such as heart disease, diabetes, and respiratory illnesses. Untreated behavioral health disorders can significantly impact the productivity of employees, increase work dissatisfaction, and lead to physical illnesses.

In recent years, numerous states have passed legislation to include behavioral health as a form of paid sick leave. In 2018, Rhode Island enacted the Healthy and Safe Families and Workplaces Act, which permits employees to use paid sick leave for different reasons, including mental health. Oregon also enacted similar legislation in 2016, which allows employees to take paid sick days for mental health reasons. Other states such as, Arizona, Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts, and Michigan have also included mental health as a legitimate reason for paid sick leave. Studies show that allowing employees to take mental health days can significantly increase a healthy work-life balance, help employees effectively manage fatigue, and boost energy in the workplace.

PROBLEM

Currently, behavioral health is not recognized in California law as a reason to take paid sick leave. Studies show employees who suffer from behavioral health conditions experience a decrease in work productivity and an increase in work-life dissatisfaction, stress, and physical health conditions.

SOLUTION

AB 1844 will allow employees to take paid sick leave for behavioral health reasons in the same manner as they would for a physical illness. Adding behavioral health as a valid reason to take paid sick leave will vastly improve an employee's abilities to seek treatment, improve productivity, and develop a healthy work-life balance. It will also help break down the stigma around behavioral health in the workplace.

SPONSOR

Mental Health America of California

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