



CALIFORNIA COUNCIL OF COMMUNITY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AGENCIES

April 13, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of
Representatives
S-222, US Capitol
Washington, DC 20511

Dear Speaker Pelosi,

As leaders of the California Council of Community Behavioral Health Agencies (CBHA), a statewide association of over 70 non-profit agencies and businesses serving more than 500,000 children, youth, adults and older adults in California who live with mental health and substance use disorders (SUD), we write to respectfully urge inclusion of an emergency appropriation allocation of \$38.5 billion for behavioral health organizations in the next stimulus package.

Organizations that deliver mental health and SUD services, particularly those serving low income individuals, are at risk of collapse nationwide. The combination of lost revenue, increased costs for staff overtime, lack of personal protective equipment and the need to purchase telehealth equipment is overwhelming these organizations.

The situation in California is especially dire, according to a recent survey of 31 CBHA member agencies that collectively serve more than 210,000 Californians annually. The impacts of COVID-19 are illustrated across the following areas:

- **Lack of protective equipment** - 89 percent lack the necessary PPE, including masks, hand sanitizer and gloves.
- **Decreased staff capacity** – 74 percent have fewer staff available to work due to staff with caretaking responsibilities at home and/or treating their own COVID-19 symptoms or diagnoses.
- **Reductions in revenue** – 52 percent of agencies are serving fewer clients, 39 percent are serving the same amount of clients and 10 percent are serving more. Furthermore, the duration and frequency of services provided has decreased, which decreases revenue to the organization.
- **Furloughs and layoffs** - 32 percent have already instituted furloughs, 10 percent have laid off staff and 14 percent are making plans to furlough or layoff staff.

These statistics illustrate that if we do not take steps now to avert the collapse of the system, we can expect hundreds of thousands of individuals with mental illness and addiction to arrive in overtaxed emergency departments across the state.

California mental health and SUD providers desperately need this emergency funding in the next legislative package in order to maintain operations and ensure stability for the duration of the crisis. However, the value of such an investment goes far beyond the immediate need.

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), calls in March to the national mental health hotline increased 891 percent compared to the same period last year. We know from experience that once this crisis has subsided, CBHA members will see an onslaught of new patients experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health and PSUD emergencies.

The \$38.5 billion infusion will ensure that mental health and SUD organizations in California are viable to respond – immediately and when the crisis has passed but the effects remain. We urge you to include this critical financial support in the next COVID-19 legislative package.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of our request.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul Curtis".

Paul Curtis
Executive Director
California Council of Community Behavioral Health Agencies

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Le Ondra Clark Harvey".

Le Ondra Clark Harvey, Ph.D.
Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs
California Council of Community Behavioral Health Agencies