[Date]

The Honorable Jim Wood

Chair, Assembly Health Committee

State Capitol Room 6005

**RE: AB 512 (Ting): Cultural Competence in Mental Health-SUPPORT**

Dear Assemblymember Wood:

On behalf of the [insert org], I am pleased to support AB 512 (Ting), which requires counties to set forward-looking goals in their mental health cultural competency plans and requires the Department of Healthcare Services (DHCS) to annually review and monitor their progress. Cultural competence plans represent an important tool to address mental health disparities, yet these plans do not set performance goals. Despite tremendous gains in mental health coverage, communities of color and LGBTQ+ communities continue to experience disparities in quality and access to mental health treatment. This bill would ensure that counties have the guidance they need to realize the full vision of the cultural competence plan requirements and reduce disparities.

INSERT ORG INFO + Why Important

**AB 512 Reduces Mental Health Disparities through Better Data**

AB 470 (Arambula), passed in 2017, requires DHCS to publicly report data on county mental health programs and disparities. Data shows that the majority of Latinos and Asian Pacific Islander consumers who visit a mental health practitioner do not return for subsequent visits. Black communities are disproportionately served through emergency and non-voluntary mental health treatment rather than prevention and early intervention. LGBTQ+ individuals face a number of mental health disparities, including higher rates of mental health disorders, higher rates of substance use, and higher rates of suicide. Now that this information is available to counties and stakeholders, it is time to use the data to improve mental health outcomes and reduce persistent disparities so that counties can develop strategies that improve access to treatment.

**AB 512 Improves the Quality of Mental Health Care through Greater Accountability**

This bill would require DHCS to enforce and monitor the execution of cultural competency plans, in coordination with other state entities, to help achieve performance goals in mental health. Prior to 2010, the Department of Mental Health (DMH) provided guidelines and reviewed the cultural competence plans. When DMH was folded into DHCS, this work ended. DHCS has not provided updated guidance to counties or reviewed plans since it received this authority. This bill provides greater guidance and accountability to ensure that counties receive the feedback needed to successfully meet the diverse mental health needs in the community.

**Conclusion**

Although some county mental health plans have made efforts towards developing culturally and linguistically competent services, it is imperative that all counties be supported in the effort to ensure that communities of color and LGBTQ+ have access to the right services, at the right time. Counties need further guidance in order to make cultural competency plans useful and reduce disparities. It is crucial the state collaborate with stakeholders to provide greater guidance and oversight. We urge your support for AB 512 to improve mental health access for vulnerable communities.

Sincerely,

Name

Title

CC:

Members of the Assembly Health Committee

Assemblymember Phil Ting, Author