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April 14, 2021

The Honorable Joaquin Arambula, M.D.
California State Assembly Member
California State Capitol, Room 5155
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 451 (Arambula) Health care facilities: treatment of psychiatric emergency medical conditions – SUPPORT

Dear Assembly Member Arambula:

On behalf of the National Alliance on Mental Illness - California (NAMI-CA), I am writing to express support of your AB 451, which specifies that an acute psychiatric hospital, regardless of whether it maintains an emergency department, is required to provide emergency care and services to relieve or eliminate a psychiatric emergency medical condition.

NAMI-CA is the statewide affiliate of the country's largest mental health advocacy organization, the National Alliance on Mental Illness. Our over 110,000 active advocates and 62 affiliates include many people living with serious mental illnesses, their families, and supporters. NAMI-CA advocates on their behalf, providing education and support to its members and the broader community.

AB 451 improves patient access to psychiatric transfers by requiring all hospitals, including stand-alone psychiatric hospitals, to accept higher level psychiatric transfers regardless of the patient's ability to pay and prohibits hospitals from requiring an individual be on a 51150 involuntary hold as a condition of accepting a patient transfer.

Section 1317 of the Health and Safety code ensures that anyone who seeks care in an Emergency Department (ED) is treated for their medical condition when the person is in danger of loss of life or serious injury or illness – regardless of their ability to pay. After an evaluation by an emergency physician, some individuals require additional psychiatric services and need to be transferred for appropriate treatment to a psychiatric hospital. There is concern that some psychiatric hospitals may be using the language in Section 1317, which only applies to California hospitals that maintain and operate an ED, as justification for not accepting all patients. AB 451 clarifies that these hospitals must accept all patients in psychiatric emergency.

For these reasons, NAMI-CA is pleased to support AB 451. I may be reached at jessica@namica.org or (916) 567-0163 with any questions you may have. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Jessica Cruz, MPA/HS
Chief Executive Officer