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April 14, 2021

The Honorable Sharon Quirk-Silva
California State Assembly Member
California State Capitol, Room 6012
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 638 Integrated School-Based Behavioral Health Partnership Program – SUPPORT

Dear Assembly Member Quirk-Silva:

On behalf of the National Alliance on Mental Illness - California (NAMI-CA), I am writing to express support of your AB 638, which acknowledges the importance of maximizing the use of Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funding for people with serious mental illness and substance use disorders.

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.

Last year, NAMI-CA supported your bill, AB 2265 (Chapter 144, Statutes of 2020) that clarified that counties may use MHSA funds to treat individuals with co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders. This year, AB 638 builds on that legislation by specifically authorizing counties to use MHSA Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) funds to address both mental health and substance use disorder needs in their communities. A key goal of PEI services is to reach individuals at the earliest possible sign to prevent mental health problems from worsening. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, researchers have found that about half of individuals who experience a substance use disorder during their lives will also experience a co-occurring mental disorder and vice versa. Therefore, it is critical that counties be authorized to use PEI funds in ways that address and change the trajectories of these two interlinked health problems before they become severe and disabling.

For these reasons, NAMI-CA is pleased to support AB 638. 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