



National Alliance on Mental Illness

NAMI California

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April 18, 2022

The Honorable Jim Wood, Chair
Assembly Committee on Health
1020 N Street, Room 390
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 2281 (Lackey) Mental Health Preschool Services Act – **SUPPORT**

Dear Assembly Member Wood:

NAMI-CA supports AB 2281 (Lackey), which will establish the Mental Health Preschool Services Act, administered by the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission, to award grants to mental health entities funding partnerships between these entities and preschool and daycare programs for children from birth to 5 years of age.

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.

Research shows that half of all lifetime cases of diagnosable mental illnesses begin by age 14, three-fourths begin by age 24, and most substance use begins in adolescence, emphasizing the need to strengthen prevention and early identification and intervention services.

Thankfully, California's Surgeon General has developed protocols and training for mandated reporters to assist with detection of children suffering from Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and California has invested \$4.4 billion in the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative.

While we are moving to a statewide, inclusive, and comprehensive approach to tackling this long-term problem, individual counties need support in expanding services to children suffering at a younger age.

NAMI California believes that, at the earliest possible time in their lives, all children and adolescents with serious mental illnesses deserve to be diagnosed, appropriately treated, and offered the services necessary to achieve and maintain their recovery.

For these reasons, NAMI-CA supports AB 2281. I may be reached at jessica@namica.org or (916) 567-0163. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jessica Cruz,
MPA/HS
Chief Executive Officer