

AB 2018 (MAIENSCHIN): MENTAL HEALTH WORKFORCE PLANNING: LOAN FORGIVENESS, LOAN REPAYMENT AND SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS

POSITION: The Chamber's Healthcare Committee voted to SUPPORT AB 2018 on May 9, 2018. The Public Policy Committee voted to SUPPORT AB 2018 on June 12, 2018.

RATIONALE: AB 2018 would help to alleviate the shortage of needed psychiatrists across the state.

STATUS: Assemblymember Brian Maienschein introduced AB 2018 on February 5, 2018. It passed off of the Assembly Floor and is in the Senate Committee on Appropriations.

SUMMARY

AB 2018 amends regulations for the Steven M. Thompson Physician Corp Loan Repayment Program (STLRP) to include psychiatric trainees that have committed to working in county mental health plans or county mental health plan contracted services to the list of eligible participants. Participation in STLRP provides beneficiaries with up to \$105,000 in educational loan repayment in exchange for three years of full-time service.

INDUSTRY/IES IMPACTED

Businesses and service providers that contract with county mental/behavioral health services will be impacted as their trainees are incentivized to pursue degrees eligible for STLRP benefits.

SUPPORTERS

Steinberg Institute (cosponsor)
American Academy of Pediatrics- California
Association of California Healthcare Districts
California Hospital Association
County Behavioral Health Director Association
Engineers and Scientists of California, AFL-CIO

OPPONENTS

None known

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR

The author cites the shortage of psychiatrists throughout the country as the need for the bill. He further cites that in California, 23 of California's 58 counties have fewer than one psychiatrist per 100,000 residents and that six counties have no psychiatrists at all. The shortage has real impacts on our communities and on the ability of local government to respond to mental health needs of those most vulnerable.

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION

The loan repayment that will enable more trainees to enter the pipeline does not fully address the high cost of educating future psychiatrists.

MORE INFORMATION

Numerous reports have cited the continued deficit in mental health professionals including psychiatrists. These studies often connect the shortage to accessibility issues, with the statistic of only 37 percent of Californians with a mental illness being able to receive treatment. Further exacerbating the recruitment of psychiatrists at the county government level are the salary discrepancies resulting from public sector's inability to compete with private sector opportunities. As a result, workforce shortages are more acute for those serving individuals perhaps that are the neediest.