



RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES
OF CALIFORNIA

April 3, 2024

The Honorable Marc Berman, Chair
Assembly Committee on Business and Professions
1020 N Street, Room 379
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: Assembly Bill 2051 (Bonta) PSYPACT – SUPPORT
As introduced February 1, 2024**

Dear Chair Berman,

On behalf of Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), we support Assembly Bill 2051, authored by Assembly Member Bonta, to add California to the Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact (PSYPACT). This measure will increase access to behavioral health services in California at a critical time when we are facing both a mental health crisis and a workforce shortage.

RCRC is an association of forty rural California counties and the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of elected supervisors from each of those member counties. Counties provide vital mental health and substance use disorder services, primarily to California's low-income populations with serious mental illness and substance use disorders, through Medi-Cal and other programs.

Today, nearly one in six Californians is experiencing some form of mental illness, but access to care is devastatingly limited. According to a 2018 poll by the California Health Care Foundation (CHCF) and the Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF), only 23% of Californians received the mental health services they needed. This disparity between need and access to care is in large part due to the ever-worsening behavioral health workforce shortage. Attrition across the industry will exacerbate this shortage in the years to come. According to the Steinberg Institute, to meet the growing need for behavioral health services and attrition across the field, California will need to add nearly 375,000 behavioral health workers over the next decade. Specifically, California will need to add approximately 30,000 psychologists to its workforce over the next 10 years.

When Californians do find a psychologist, they cannot see them when they are traveling out of state or if they relocate to another state, disrupting their care. This is particularly important for young adults who move out of the state to attend college. The

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The Honorable Marc Berman
Assembly Bill 2051 (Bonta)
April 3, 2024
Page 2

current psychology workforce and existing laws surrounding the practice of psychology do not adequately address or accurately reflect the needs of Californians.

Occupational licensure compacts are one way we can address the behavioral health workforce shortage and get Californians the care they need now. Through licensure compacts, states establish and agree upon uniform standards that enable multi-state practice. There are currently 15 Occupational Licensure Compacts recognized by the National Center for Interstate Compacts. PSYPACT, the occupational licensure compact for psychologists, was created by the Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards (ASSPB) in 2014. To date, 40 states have enacted PSYPACT legislation, and joined the compact. By providing a means for psychologists to practice across state lines, PSYPACT increases access to care and allows for continuity of care when patients or providers relocate or travel. Because all compact states enact the same model legislation, PSYPACT promotes cooperation between states and provides a means for telepsychology regulation and consumer protection.

California can't afford not to join PSYPACT. We must use all tools at our disposal to address our behavioral health workforce shortage and ensure clients have access to care and continuity of care. For these reasons, RCRC is pleased to support AB 2051. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (916) 447-4806 or sdukett@rcrcnet.org.

Sincerely,



SARAH DUKETT
Policy Advocate

cc: The Honorable Mia Bonta, Member of the California State Assembly
Members of the Assembly Business and Professions Committee
Vincent Chee, Consultant, Assembly Business and Professions Committee
Bill Lewis, Consultant, Assembly Republican Caucus