



April 14, 2023

The Honorable Corey Jackson
Chair, Assembly Human Services Committee
1021 O Street, Room 6120
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 551 (Bennett): Medi-Cal: Specialty Mental Health Services for Foster Children
As Amended April 6, 2023 – SUPPORT
Set for Hearing April 18, 2023, in Assembly Human Services Committee**

Dear Chair Jackson:

On behalf of the Urban Counties of California (UCC) and Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), we are writing in support of Assembly Bill 551 (Bennett). AB 551 proposes to delay the implementation of Assembly Member Bennett's AB 1051 (Chapter 402, Statutes of 2022) by one year from July 1, 2023, to July 1, 2024, to ensure that counties and providers are prepared to implement the changes to presumptive transfer.

Last year the Legislature passed AB 1051, which clarified the responsibility associated with providing and paying for mental health services when a foster youth is temporarily placed in a short term residential therapeutic program (STRTP) outside of their original county. Specifically, AB 1051 requires the county of origin to retain fiscal responsibility when placing a foster youth. The bill allows an exception if the foster youth is transferred permanently to the new county, or if the transfer of responsibility would result in better care. AB 1051 is set to take effect on July 1, 2023.

When foster youth need special care and attention to address complex needs, they may be placed into STRTPs. STRTPs provide specialty mental health services and are located in various regions of California. Specifically, they provide trauma-informed therapeutic interventions and integrated programming to aid in the child's transition into a home-based family setting. Foster youth can undergo placement changes for a variety of reasons, and in some instances, are placed in a STRTP outside of their original county. For example, San Francisco County contains no STRTPs and so youth must be placed out of county. When a new county assumes oversight of care, this is known as a presumptive transfer.

Since AB 1051 was signed, the joint power authority partner that works with county behavioral health agencies has announced updates underway to the fiscal portal used to transmit funding,

which will take some months to accomplish. These critical updates will streamline payments between counties for services rendered through presumptive transfer. Additionally, many CalAIM reforms to Medi-Cal are also set to take effect on July 1, 2023.

Due to these upcoming administrative changes, AB 551 (Bennett) is essential to provide a one-year extension so that counties and providers can appropriately prepare and plan to implement AB 1051.

For the reasons outlined above, UCC and RCRC support AB 551 and urge your 'ye' vote. Should you have any questions regarding our position, please do not hesitate to have your staff contact our organizations.

Sincerely,



Kelly Brooks-Lindsey
Legislative Advocate
UCC
kbl@hbeadvocacy.com
916-753-0844



Sarah Dukett
Policy Advocate
RCRC
sdukett@rcrcnet.org
916-447-4806

cc: The Honorable Steve Bennett, Member, California State Assembly
Members and Consultants, Assembly Human Services Committee