



April 30, 2024

The Honorable Buffy Wicks  
Assembly Committee on Appropriations  
1021 O Street, Suite 8220  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: Assembly Bill 2051 (Bonta) PSYPACT – SUPPORT  
As Amended April 17, 2024**

Dear Chair Wicks,

On behalf of Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), California State Association of Counties (CSAC), and Urban Counties of California (UCC) 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.

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 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, CSAC, and UCC are pleased to support AB 2051, and respectfully request your "Aye" vote when this measure is heard before your committee. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,



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cc: The Honorable Mia Bonta, Member of the California State Assembly  
Members of the Assembly Appropriations Committee  
Allegra Kim, Principal Consultant, Assembly Appropriations Committee  
Joe Shinstock, Fiscal Director, Assembly Republican Caucus