



**COUNTY OF
SAN BERNARDINO**
**COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE
OFFICE**

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Director of Legislative Affairs

February 25, 2011

The Honorable Jim Beall
California State Assembly
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: **AB 154 (Beall)** - As introduced January 18, 2011 - **SUPPORT**

Dear Assemblyman Beall:

The San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors is pleased to support AB 154. This legislation would require health plans and insurers to cover the diagnosis and medically necessary treatment of a mental illness and substance abuse addictions of a person of any age under the same terms and conditions applied to other medical conditions.

As you know, inadequate access to mental health services forces our public safety personnel to serve as the mental health providers of last resort; the lack of access to appropriate care for mentally ill persons often results in incarceration in our county detention facilities. In fact, nearly 20 percent of the inmates in our detention facilities are seriously mentally ill. Providing mental health treatment and medication for these inmates is a large drain on county resources.

The practice by the private insurance market of excluding or limiting coverage of mental health services shifts the financial burden to the state and counties. Mentally ill persons who lack access to appropriate care often end up in our county hospital to receive these services from an already overburdened county health system.

Numerous studies have shown that mental illness is treatable. Appropriate and timely treatment of mental health conditions and disorders reduces costly hospitalizations, incarcerations, homelessness, and human suffering. AB 154 would help ensure that private health plans treat individuals with mental health, substance abuse, and co-occurring disorders in a comprehensive way.

For these reasons, the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors supports AB 154. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact Lance Larson, the County's Director of Legislative Affairs at (909) 387-4821. The County thanks you for your attention in this matter.

Sincerely,

JOSIE GONZALES
Chair, Board of Supervisors

The mission of the government of the County of San Bernardino is to satisfy its customers by providing service that promotes the health, safety, well being, and quality of life of its residents according to the County Charter, general laws, and the will of the people it serves.