



**COUNTY OF  
SAN BERNARDINO**

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LANCE M. LARSON  
Director of Legislative Affairs

February 17, 2010

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

RE: **AB 1600 (Beall)** - As introduced January 4, 2010 - **SUPPORT**

Dear Assemblyman Beall:

The San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors is pleased to support AB 1600. 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 scarce county resources.

The practice by the private insurance market of excluding or limiting coverage of mental health services benefits the private insurance market, and shifts that financial burden to the state and to counties. In addition, mentally ill persons who lack access to appropriate care often end up in our county hospital and receive mental health services from our county programs, already burdened by scarce resources.

Numerous studies have shown that mental illness is treatable, and that appropriate and timely treatment of mental health conditions and disorders reduces costly hospitalizations, incarcerations, homelessness, and human suffering. AB 1600 would help ensure that private health plans treat individuals with mental health, substance abuse, or co-occurring disorders in a comprehensive way.

For these reasons, the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors supports AB 1600. 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 Board thanks you for your attention in this matter.

Sincerely,

**GARY C. OVITT**  
Chairman, Board of Supervisors

cc: Members, San Bernardino County Legislative Delegation