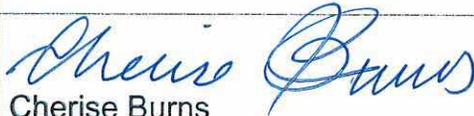


## MEMORANDUM

DATE	April 9, 2017
TO	Board of Psychology
FROM	 Cherise Burns Central Services Manager
SUBJECT	Agenda Item #4(a)(2) – AB 89 (Levine) - Suicide Assessment and Intervention Coursework Requirements

### Background:

This item provides a brief history and synopsis of the Board's Suicide Assessment and Intervention Coursework/Training Requirement Bill AB 89 (Levine).

In response to the Governor's veto message of AB 2198 (Levine, 2014) relating to mandated one-time continuing education (CE) coursework in suicide prevention, assessment and training, the Board conducted surveys of doctoral programs and pre- and post-doctoral internship and practicum programs and reviews of licensure requirements for licensed psychologists in 2015. The Board's Licensing Committee then reviewed the issue and determined that due to gaps in the current educational and training requirements, that there should be a minimal one-time requirement for coursework or training in suicide risk assessment and intervention for all licensed psychologists. In 2016, the Licensing Committee, in coordination with Board staff and Legal Counsel, worked on draft language and background materials for presentation to the Board. During the Licensing Committee meetings in 2016, multiple stakeholders provided input on the draft language, and Assembly Member Levine's office watched committee hearings and periodically checked in with Board staff on the progress of the Committee. In anticipation of the Board's consideration of the Licensing Committee's proposed language at its November 2016 meeting, Assembly Member Levine's office submitted the Licensing Committee's draft language to Legislative Counsel to be drafted into un-backed draft bill language. Legislators can submit multiple drafts of un-backed draft text to Legislative Counsel and create multiple drafts of a bill that can later be introduced in the Legislature as a bill backed by an author.

At the November 2016 Board Meeting, the Licensing Committee and Policy and Advocacy Committee jointly presented the Suicide Assessment and Intervention Coursework Requirement Legislative Proposal. This proposal would, effective January 1, 2020, require all applicants for licensure as a psychologist with the Board of Psychology (Board) to have completed a minimum of six (6) hours of coursework and/or applied experience under supervision in suicide risk assessment and intervention. This requirement could be met through coursework in their qualifying degree program, continuing education courses, or as part of their applied experience in any of the

of the Committee on a 14-1-1 vote (Aye-No-Abstained) and referred to the Assembly Committee on Appropriations.

Unexpectedly, the Assembly Committee on Appropriations decided to hear AB 89 at its next hearing on April 5, 2017, the analysis prepared by the Committee is attached (Attachment E). The Board sent a revised letter of support detailing the operational and fiscal impacts of AB 89 (Attachment F) to the Assembly Committee on Appropriations on April 4, 2017. The hearing went very quickly as the Committee had no concerns with the minor and absorbable costs of the bill, and Assembly Member Marc Levine and Cherise Burns testified in support of the bill. AB 89 was unanimously passed out of the Committee on a 17-0-0 vote and referred to the Assembly Floor.

In the coming months, Board staff will be working with Assembly Member Levine to garner additional support for the bill, meet with opposition to the bill as requested by the Assembly Committee on Business and Professions, and developing letters and holding meetings with legislative staff in preparation for the Assembly Floor vote.

**Location:** Assembly Floor

**Status:** 04/06/2017 Read second time, ordered to third reading.

**Votes:** Assembly Committee on Business and Professions (14-1-1)  
Assembly Committee on Appropriations (17-0-0)

**Action Requested:**

This item is for informational purposes only. No action is requested at this time.

Attachment A: AB 89 (Levine) Text

Attachment B: List of Support/Opposition

Attachment C: Board's Letter to Assembly Committee on Business and Professions

Attachment D: Assembly Committee on Business and Professions Analysis

Attachment E: Assembly Committee on Appropriations Analysis

Attachment F: Board's Letter to Assembly Committee on Appropriations

**ASSEMBLY BILL**

**No. 89**

---

**Introduced by Assembly Member Levine**

January 9, 2017

---

An act to add Section 2915.4 to the Business and Professions Code, relating to psychologists.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 89, as introduced, Levine. Psychologists: suicide prevention training.

Existing law, the Psychology Licensing Law, provides for the licensing and regulation of psychologists and requires a person applying for licensure as a psychologist to have completed specified coursework or training. Existing law also requires licensed psychologists to participate in continuing professional development as a prerequisite for renewing their licenses. Existing law requires a person applying for relicensure or for reinstatement to an active license status to certify under penalty of perjury that he or she has fulfilled the continuing professional development requirements. Existing law defines "continuing professional development" as certain continuing education learning activities and provides requirements for continuing education courses approved to meet the continuing professional development requirements.

This bill, effective January 1, 2020, would require an applicant for licensure as a psychologist to complete a minimum of 6 hours of coursework or applied experience under supervision in suicide risk assessment and intervention. The bill would also require, effective January 1, 2020, as a one-time requirement, a licensed psychologist to have completed this suicide risk assessment and intervention training

requirement prior to the time of his or her first renewal. The bill would also require, effective January 1, 2020, a person applying for reactivation or for reinstatement to have completed this suicide risk assessment and intervention training requirement. The bill would require that proof of compliance with this provision be certified under penalty of perjury that he or she is in compliance with this provision and be retained for submission to the board upon request. By expanding the crime of perjury, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that no reimbursement is required by this act for a specified reason.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.  
State-mandated local program: yes.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

1 SECTION 1. Section 2915.4 is added to the Business and  
2 Professions Code, to read:

3 2915.4. (a) Effective January 1, 2020, an applicant for licensure  
4 as a psychologist shall show, as part of the application, that he or  
5 she has completed a minimum of six hours of coursework or  
6 applied experience under supervision in suicide risk assessment  
7 and intervention. This requirement shall be met in one of the  
8 following ways:

9 (1) Obtained as part of his or her qualifying graduate degree  
10 program. To satisfy this requirement, the applicant shall submit  
11 to the board a written certification from the registrar or training  
12 director of the educational institution or program from which the  
13 applicant graduated stating that the coursework required by this  
14 section is included within the institution's curriculum required for  
15 graduation at the time the applicant graduated, or within the  
16 coursework that was completed by the applicant.

17 (2) Obtained as part of his or her applied experience. Applied  
18 experience can be met in any of the following settings: practicum,  
19 internship, or formal postdoctoral placement that meets the  
20 requirement of Section 2911, or other qualifying supervised  
21 professional experience. To satisfy this requirement, the applicant  
22 shall submit to the board a written certification from the director

1 of training for the program or primary supervisor where the  
2 qualifying experience has occurred stating that the training required  
3 by this section is included within the applied experience.

4 (3) By taking a continuing education course that meets the  
5 requirements of subdivision (e) or (f) of Section 2915 and that  
6 qualifies as a continuing education learning activity category  
7 specified in paragraph (2) or (3) of subdivision (c) of Section 2915.  
8 To satisfy this requirement, the applicant shall submit to the board  
9 a certification of completion.

10 (b) Effective January 1, 2020, as a one-time requirement, a  
11 licensee prior to the time of his or her first renewal after the  
12 operative date of this section, or an applicant for reactivation or  
13 reinstatement to an active license status, shall have completed a  
14 minimum of six hours of coursework or applied experience under  
15 supervision in suicide risk assessment and intervention, as specified  
16 in subdivision (a). Proof of compliance with this section shall be  
17 certified under penalty of perjury that he or she is in compliance  
18 with this section and shall be retained for submission to the board  
19 upon request.

20 SEC. 2. No reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to  
21 Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution because  
22 the only costs that may be incurred by a local agency or school  
23 district will be incurred because this act creates a new crime or  
24 infraction, eliminates a crime or infraction, or changes the penalty  
25 for a crime or infraction, within the meaning of Section 17556 of  
26 the Government Code, or changes the definition of a crime within  
27 the meaning of Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California  
28 Constitution.

## **AB 89 (Levine) Support and Opposition**

### **Support**

#### **Organization/ Individual**

Board of Psychology  
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
American Medical Response  
California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA)  
California Professional Firefighters  
California State Sheriffs' Association  
Caminar for Mental Health, aka Family & Children Services of Silicon Valley  
Children Now  
County Behavioral Health Directors Association of California  
Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services (Suicide Prevention Center)  
Marin County Sheriff's Office  
NAMI Santa Cruz  
Project Safety Net, City of Palo Alto  
San Francisco Suicide Prevention  
Stanislaus County Sheriff's Department  
The Trevor Project  
Uplift Family Services  
Young Minds Advocacy  
CalTrain - Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board  
11 Individuals

### **Opposition**

#### **Organization/ Individual**

California Psychological Association

March 16, 2017

The Honorable Rudy Salas, Jr.  
Chair, Assembly Committee on Business and Professions  
State Capitol, Room 4016  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 89 (Levine) – Psychologists: suicide prevention training – SPONSOR**

Dear Assembly Member Salas:

The Board of Psychology (Board) is pleased to **SPONSOR** AB 89 (Levine).

This bill would, effective January 1, 2020, require all licensees and applicants for licensure as a psychologist to have completed a minimum of six (6) hours of coursework, and/or applied experience under supervision in suicide risk assessment and intervention. This requirement could be met through coursework in a qualifying degree program, continuing education courses, or as part of supervised applied experience. For current licensees, this requirement could be fulfilled with new or past coursework, applied experience, or continuing education courses in suicide risk assessment and intervention.

Suicide is a critical public health issue in the State of California, where on average, one person dies of suicide every two hours and twice as many people die of suicide than by homicide. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) data shows that suicide is the third leading cause of death for Californians ages 15 to 34, and the tenth leading cause of death for Californians of all ages between the years of 2000-2015. Furthermore, CDC data also shows that the overall suicide rate in California has increased by 21.4 percent between the years 2000 through 2015.

After much consideration and deliberation, our Board feels it is time to take a leading role in this area and require suicide prevention training of our licensees. In response to the Governor's veto message of AB 2198 (Levine, 2014) relating to mandated one-time continuing education coursework in suicide prevention, the Board conducted surveys of doctoral programs and pre- and post-doctoral internship and practicum programs and reviews of licensure requirements for licensed psychologists in 2015 and 2016. The Board's surveys indicated significant variances in the amount of education and training being provided to psychologists and applicants, ranging from integrating pieces of the education and training across multiple courses (not quantifiable in hours), to dedicating time in courses or training programs ranging anywhere from 6 to 50 hours. Additionally, during the Board's review of licensure requirements and drafting of the suicide prevention training requirement language, the Board held multiple meetings where we received productive feedback from the public, suicide prevention advocates, persons affected by suicide, licensed psychologists and other mental health providers, and professional associations. The Board carefully weighed the data collected and the public input received during the review process, and determined that this issue required Board leadership and action. Although psychologists are among the best trained clinicians in mental health and expert in the rendering of psychological services, the variance in training received in graduate and training programs does not adequately ensure that consumers would be consistently assisted by all of our licensees. The Board decided to pursue a statutory requirement to establish a minimum number of hours of education or training in suicide risk assessment and intervention.

Competency in the assessment and treatment of suicidal patients is not a fixed quality, but rather requires ongoing education and training for licensees who may have received their training many

Page 2

**AB 89: SPONSOR**

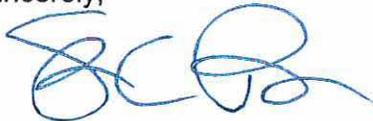
March 13, 2017

years ago. It is the Board's hope that by sponsoring AB 89 and highlighting the critical importance of suicide prevention training in the field of psychology, it will encourage licensees to periodically re-evaluate their level of competency in assessing and treating suicidal patients and further encourage licensees to seek additional training in suicide risk assessment and intervention. The Board also hopes that this bill will encourage graduate programs, internship programs, and post-doctoral training programs to evaluate the amount of training provided in these programs to ensure that their students and trainees complete the program feeling confident that they have the training they need to practice responsibly as psychologists.

AB 89 will not only help promote public health through improving the state's suicide prevention efforts, but also puts California in a leadership role with other states that protect consumers of psychological services through mandatory training in this critical area. AB 89 takes a critical first step in improving the state's suicide prevention efforts by meeting one of the goals of the 2008 "California Strategic Plan on Suicide Prevention: Every Californian is a Part of the Solution," which proposed developing and implementing guidelines to promote effective and consistent suicide prevention by incorporating suicide prevention training in existing licensing, credentialing, and graduate school programs. Furthermore, AB 89 puts California in line with six other states that require psychologists and licensed health care professionals to obtain a specified minimum number of hours of education or training in suicide risk assessment and intervention. By ensuring all psychologists meet a minimum level of education or training in suicide prevention, AB 89 enhances the state's suicide prevention efforts and protects consumers of psychological services who rely on psychologists having the basic education and training required to identify and aid a patient with suicidal ideation in finding competent treatment.

For these reasons, the Board asks for your support of AB 89 when it is heard in the Assembly Committee on Business and Professions. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the Board's Executive Officer, Antonette Sorricks, at (916) 574-7113. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "SCPH", is written over a faint, light blue circular stamp or watermark.

STEPHEN C. PHILLIPS, JD, PsyD  
President, Board of Psychology

cc: Members of the Assembly Committee on Business and Professions  
Assembly Member Marc Levine  
Le Ondra Clark Harvey, PhD, Chief Consultant, Assembly Committee on Business and Professions  
Bill Lewis, Consultant, Assembly Republican Caucus

Date of Hearing: March 28, 2017

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONS  
Rudy Salas, Chair  
AB 89 (Levine) – As Introduced January 9, 2017

**SUBJECT:** Psychologists: suicide prevention training.

**SUMMARY:** Requires, on January 1, 2020, an applicant for licensure as a psychologist to complete a minimum of six hours of coursework or applied experience under supervision in suicide risk assessment and intervention, as specified; and also requires an applicant for renewal to complete a one-time requirement of a minimum of six hours of coursework or applied experience under supervision in suicide risk assessment and intervention.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Requires an applicant for licensure as a psychologist to: (Business and Professions Code (BPC) Section 2914 Section (C)(1), (d)(1), (e), (f), (g)(1-2)
  - a) Possess an earned doctorate degree in in psychology, educational psychology, or in education with the field of specialization in counseling psychology or educational psychology, as specified;
  - b) Have engaged for at least two years in supervised professional experience under the direction of a licensed psychologist, as specified;
  - c) Take and pass an examination; and,
  - d) Show by evidence satisfactory to the Board that the applicant has completed training in the detection and treatment of alcohol and other chemical substance dependency and has completed coursework in spousal or partner abuse assessment; as specified.
- 2) Requires the Board to encourage every licensed psychologist to take continuing professional development in geriatric pharmacology. (BPC Section 2914.1)
- 3) Requires the Board to encourage licensed psychologists to take continuing professional development in psychopharmacology and biological basis behavior. (BPC Section 2914.2)
- 4) Requires any applicant for licensure as a psychologist who began graduate study after January 1, 2004, to complete a minimum of 10 contact hours or coursework in aging and long-term care and after January 1, 2012, the coursework must include instruction on the assessment and reporting as well as treatment related to elder and dependent adult abuse and neglect, as specified. (BPC Section 2915)
- 5) Requires a renewal applicant to complete 36 hours of approved continuing professional development in the preceding two years, prior to renewal. (BPC Section 2915(a))

**THIS BILL:**

- 1) Requires an applicant for licensure as a psychologist, beginning January 1, 2020, to complete a minimum of six hours of coursework or applied experience under supervision in suicide risk assessment and intervention and specifies that the requirement can be met in one of the following ways:
  - a) Obtained as part of an applicant's qualifying degree program in which the applicant must submit to the Board of Psychology (Board) a written certification from the registrar or training director of the educational institution or program from which the applicant graduated stating that the required coursework is included within the institution's curriculum required for graduation at the time the applicant graduated or within the coursework that was completed by the applicant;
  - b) Obtained as part of an applicant's applied experience which can be met in practicum, internship, or formal postdoctoral placement, as specified, or other qualifying supervised professional experience, and the applicant must submit to the Board a written certification from the director of training for the program or primary supervisor where the qualifying experience has occurred stating that the required training is included within the applied experience; or
  - c) Acquired through a continuing education course, as specified.
- 2) Requires a licensee, as a one-time requirement, prior to the time of the licensee's first renewal, after January 1, 2020, or for an applicant for reactivation or reinstatement to an active license to complete the coursework specified in number 1 above.
- 3) States that no reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution because the only costs that may be incurred by a local agency or school district will be incurred because this act creates new crime or infraction, eliminates a crime or infraction, or changes the penalty for a crime or infraction, as specified.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown. This bill is keyed fiscal by the Legislative Counsel.

**COMMENTS:**

**Purpose.** This bill is sponsored by the Board of Psychology. According to the author, "studies estimate that 32% of people who die by suicide have had contact with mental health services within a year of their death. There is no requirement on the books that mental health professionals have training in suicide assessment, treatment and management. Most people would assume that if [patients need] help with suicide prevention that they should [seek] a mental health professional who has experience with suicide assessment, treatment and management. This bill is necessary to ensure that mental health professionals receive the appropriate training in suicide assessment, treatment and management, thereby protecting public health."

**Background. *Suicide Statistics.*** According to the 2017 suicide facts and figures produced by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, suicide is the 11<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in California and ranks the second leading cause of death for individuals between the ages of 25-34. Nationally, suicide is the 10<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death. According to information provided by the

National Institute of Mental Health, "suicide does not discriminate. People of all genders, ages, and ethnicities can be at risk. Suicidal behavior is complex and there is no single cause." In *State Laws: Training for Health Professionals in Suicide Assessment, Treatment and Management* produced by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention it was stated that "Mental health professionals regularly come into contact with individuals who are at risk of suicide. Despite the comorbidity of mental health disorders and suicide, the vast majority of mental health professionals—a group that includes psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, licensed counselors, and psychiatric nurses—do not typically receive routine training in suicide assessment, treatment, or risk management."

*Suicide Prevention Strategies.* The World Health Organization's 2012 Health Evidence Network report entitled, *For Which Strategies of Suicide Prevention is There Evidence of Effectiveness*, examined suicide prevention strategies utilized in Europe, the country with the highest suicide rates, and found that limiting access to means was the most effective strategy. Similarly, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention promotes teaching general practitioners to recognize and treat depression and limiting access to means as the most successful preventative efforts. The U.S. Surgeon General's *Call to Action to Prevent Suicide* suggests to, "...improve the ability of primary care providers to recognize and treat depression, substance abuse and other major mental illnesses associated with suicide risk and increase the referral to specialty care."

*Academic Standards Addressing Suicide.* Mental health professionals receive academic and clinical training that includes the identification and assessment of psychopathology including the assessment of suicidality and intervention strategies for dealing with patients in crisis. The American Psychological Association and the Council on Social Work Education accredit programs of psychology and social work respectively, and set standards for the coursework and clinical training that students receive. These bodies require that coursework address areas such as, dysfunctional behavior or psychopathology, theories and methods of assessment and diagnosis and effective intervention. For MFTs and LPCCs their required courses are outlined in statute. Both the MFT and LPCC statutes require that students receive training in, "the patient dangerous to self or others." The LPCC statute further requires training in multidisciplinary responses to crises and emergencies, crisis and trauma counseling, assessment strategies for clients in crisis and principles of intervention for individuals with mental or emotional disorders during times of crises.

*CE Requirements for Licensed Clinical Psychologists.* Psychologists are regulated by the Board. Applicants for licensure as a psychologist are required to possess an earned doctorate degree in psychology from an approved or accredited educational institution. In addition, applicants must complete specified coursework in spousal or partner abuse assessment, detection and intervention, and training in the detection and treatment of alcohol and other chemical substances dependency. All psychologists seeking licensure renewal must obtain training in the subject of laws and ethics before they apply to the practice of psychology in California. Additionally, psychologists are required to take a specified one-time, CE course in spousal or partner abuse assessment, detection and intervention strategies, and a one-time three hour CE course in aging and long-term care, or show proof to the Board of its equivalent in teaching or practicing experience. A psychologist may request an exemption from CE requirements if they meet specified criteria. This bill would add a requirement that all psychologists, through a qualified degree program, as part of supervised experience, or by CE coursework complete a minimum of six hours of coursework or applied experience in suicide risk and assessment. This bill requires all new licensure and renewal applicants to satisfy this requirement beginning January 1, 2020.

The author notes that currently six other states mandate some form of training in suicide assessment, treatment and manager for health professionals.

*Prior Attempts at Mandating Suicide Prevention Training.* In 2014, AB 2198 (Levine) was introduced which would have required all licensed mental health professionals, to complete a training program in suicide assessment, treatment and management through continuing education. That bill was ultimately vetoed by the Governor. In the Governor's veto message, he stated..."California has an extensive regulatory scheme that aims to ensure that California physicians, psychologists and counselors are skilled in the healing arts to which they have committed their lives. Rather than further legislating in this field, I would ask our licensing boards to evaluate the issues which this bill raises and take whatever actions are needed."

In response to the directive in the Governor's veto message of AB 2198 (Levine), the Board conducted a survey in 2015 which was sent to graduate internships and clinical programs to better identify the coverage of suicide assessment, treatment, and management in psychology graduate and internship programs. Over ninety percent of survey respondents indicated that suicide risk, intervention and assessment are included in coursework and/or field experience. Despite these statistics, the licensing committee of the Board recommended, and the full Board approved the proposed requirement for all current and future licensees to take or provide proof to the Board that he or she has completed a minimum of 6 hours of coursework or applied experience in suicide risk and assessment. As the survey results identified, there may be programs that offer more or less than six hours of direct training and certain internship/experience and certain programs may more extensively cover this topic.

**Current Related Legislation.** AB 326 (Salas) of the current legislative session requires an applicant for licensure under the Board of Barbering and Cosmetology to take a one-hour training on domestic violence and sexual assault awareness as part of their educational requirements, as specified. *Status: This bill is currently pending in the Assembly Committee on Business and Professions.*

**Prior Related Legislation.** AB 2198 (Levine) of 2014, would have required a psychologist, marriage and family therapist, educational psychologist, professional clinical counselor and clinical social worker, who began graduate study on or after January 1, 2016, to complete a minimum of 15 hours of coursework on suicide prevention, before being issued a license. In addition, it would have commencing January 1, 2016, require a person licensed in these professions who began graduate study prior to January 1, 2016, to take a six-hour continuing education course on suicide prevention in order to renew a license. *Status: This bill was vetoed by the Governor.*

AB 2435 (Lowenthal), Chapter 552, Statutes of 2010, requires psychologists, LMFTs, LCSWs, and LPCCs to have instruction and training in the recognition and reporting of suspected elder and dependent adult abuse as requirements for licensure.

#### **ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT:**

The Board of Psychology writes in support, "After much consideration and deliberation, our Board feels it is time to take a leading role in this area and require suicide prevention training of our licensees. In response to the Governor's veto message of AB 2198 [(Levine) of 2014], relating to mandated one-time continuing education coursework in suicide prevention, the Board

conducted surveys of doctoral programs and pre-and post-doctoral internships and practicum programs and reviews of licensure requirements for licensed psychologists in 2015 and 2016...the Board carefully weighed the data collected and the public input received during the review process, and determined that this issue required Board leadership and action...the Board decided to pursue a statutory requirement to establish a minimum number of hours of education or training in suicide risk assessment and intervention. [This bill will not only help promote public health through improving the state's suicide prevention efforts, but also put California in a leadership role with other states that protect consumers of psychological services through mandatory training in this critical area.

The California State Sheriffs' Association writes in support, "[This bill] makes a minimum of six hours of coursework or experience in suicide risk assessment and intervention as a requirement for a psychologist's licensure, or renewal or reinstatement of their license. By better equipping psychologists with additional training and education, these professionals can better identify individuals who may be at risk of suicide and better address their needs."

Children Now writes in support, "...Currently, six other states require psychologists and health care professionals to obtain a minimum number of hours of education or training in suicide risk assessment and intervention, and it is time for California to take a leading role in helping prevent suicide."

The County Behavioral Health Directors Association of California writes in support, "...Assuring that all healthcare professionals are well-versed in suicide assessment, treatment, and management may save lives. Continuing professional education is already an important part of professional development. Making it explicit that suicide assessment, treatment, and management are a part of the psychologist training will help prevent avoidable deaths."

Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services writes in support, "[this bill] is a step in the right direction to meeting the strategic plan's goals by ensuring that all psychologists have a minimum level of training in this critical area."

The National Alliance on Mental Illness writes in support, "Suicides in California are on the rise, exceeding four thousand (4,000) deaths in the last several years. Few realize that suicides exceed homicide in California as a cause of death. Something needs to be done. This bill addresses one key action that you can take to help prevent suicides."

#### **ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION:**

The California Psychological Association writes in opposition, "CPA is opposed to [this bill] as [it] targets only psychologists, the practitioners within our health care system who have the most extensive training of any behavioral health professionals. A previous similar bill that mandated most mental health professionals received additional training was vetoed by the Governor in 2014. As the time of the veto, he asked the licensing Board to conduct a survey to determine the level of training in the area of suicide risk assessment and prevention. The survey results overwhelmingly showed that students were being taught the principles of suicide prevention not only in their coursework, but also in experiential learning settings including supervised practicum, and pre-doctoral and post-doctoral internships.

**POLICY CONSIDERATIONS:**

In the spirit of supporting suicide prevention efforts, this bill requires both applicants for licensure and licensed psychologists to provide proof to the Board that he or she has completed a minimum of six hours of coursework or applied experience under supervision in suicide risk assessment and intervention. Currently, the only required coursework specified in statute for licensed psychologists is a requirement for a minimum of 10 hours of coursework in aging and long term care and treatment related to elder and dependent adult abuse and neglect. In addition, BPC Section 2914.1 and 2914.2 requires the Board to encourage all licensees to take continuing professional development in geriatric pharmacology and in psychopharmacology and biological basis of behavior. The author may wish to explain to the Committee why licensed psychologists, the mental health professions with the highest amount of training and education, were determined to be deficient in suicide risk assessment and intervention coursework and training. In addition, the author may wish to explain to the Committee why other health professionals who have greater access to individuals, e.g. physicians and law enforcement professionals, were not included in this measure.

**REGISTERED SUPPORT:**

Board of Psychology (sponsor)  
California Professional Firefighters  
California State Sheriffs' Association  
Children Now  
County Behavioral Health Directors Association of California  
Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services  
National Alliance on Mental Illness  
Three individuals

**REGISTERED OPPOSITION:**

California Psychological Association

**Analysis Prepared by:** Elissa Silva and Le Ondra Clark Harvey, Ph.D. / B. & P. / 916-319-3301



April 4, 2017

The Honorable Lorena Gonzalez  
Chair, Assembly Committee on Appropriations  
State Capitol, Room 2114  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 89 (Levine) – Psychologists: suicide prevention training – SPONSOR**

Dear Assembly Member Gonzalez:

The Board of Psychology (Board) is pleased to **SPONSOR** AB 89 (Levine).

This bill would, effective January 1, 2020, require all licensees and applicants for licensure as a psychologist to have completed a minimum of six (6) hours of coursework, and/or applied experience under supervision in suicide risk assessment and intervention. This requirement could be met through coursework in a qualifying degree program, continuing education courses, or as part of supervised applied experience. For current licensees, this requirement could be fulfilled with new or past coursework, applied experience, or continuing education courses in suicide risk assessment and intervention.

AB 89 would use existing Board staff processes and resources to verify compliance with AB 89's one-time training requirement and would include a minor one-time cost for BreEZe updates required for verification and data collection. AB 89 would require a one-time minor redirection of funds, estimated at \$5,000, to have the Department of Consumer Affairs' Office of Information Services add data collection mechanisms within the BreEZe system to the initial application and renewal application for psychologists in order to verify compliance with the bill. The Board would also update its initial and renewal applications available online, including related instructional materials, to include appropriate certifications to capture compliance data in the BreEZe system for manually processed applications.

After January 1, 2020, AB 89 implementation would also include verification of compliance by Board staff during the initial and renewal application review process for psychologists and during the continuing education (CE) audit process for licensed psychologists. There would be no additional costs associated with the changes to the initial application review process, renewal application review process, and CE audit process required by this bill.

Verification of compliance for applicants would be added as a component of the initial license application review process, where applicants would be required to provide written documentation showing proof of completion of the six (6) hours of coursework, applied experience, or continuing education in suicide risk assessment and intervention. If an applicant failed to provide adequate documentation of completion, this would result in denial of a license for the applicant.

Verification of compliance for currently licensed psychologists would include certification under penalty of perjury on a licensee's renewal application that the licensee met the one-time 6-hour requirement. This certification would then be verified through the Board's CE audit process, which would include verification of documentation of suicide prevention training. The Board currently audits approximately 10 percent of licensees annually and staff verify that licensees meet the required number and types of CE hours required for renewal. Failure to certify completion on the renewal application would result in delayed and/or denied renewal applications if the error were not corrected, and failure to provide adequate documentation of compliance during the CE audit would

April 4, 2017

potentially result in citations and fines, orders of abatement to complete the required training, and potentially formal discipline against the licensee if they failed to come into compliance.

Suicide is a critical public health issue in the State of California, where on average, one person dies of suicide every two hours and twice as many people die of suicide than by homicide. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) data shows that suicide is the third leading cause of death for Californians ages 15 to 34, and the tenth leading cause of death for Californians of all ages between the years of 2000-2015. Furthermore, CDC data also shows that the overall suicide rate in California has increased by 21.4 percent between the years 2000 through 2015.

After much review, consideration, and deliberation, our Board feels it is time to take a leading role in this area and require suicide prevention training of our licensees. In response to the Governor's veto message of AB 2198 (Levine, 2014) relating to mandated one-time continuing education coursework in suicide prevention, the Board conducted surveys of doctoral programs and pre- and post-doctoral internship and practicum programs and reviews of licensure requirements for licensed psychologists in 2015 and 2016. The Board's surveys indicated significant variances in the amount of education and training being provided to psychologists and applicants, ranging from integrating pieces of the education and training across multiple courses (not quantifiable in hours), to dedicating time in courses or training programs ranging anywhere from 6 to 50 hours. Additionally, during the Board's review of licensure requirements and drafting of the suicide prevention training requirement language, the Board held multiple meetings where we received productive feedback from the public, suicide prevention advocates, persons affected by suicide, licensed psychologists and other mental health providers, and professional associations. The Board carefully weighed the data collected and the public input received during the review process, and determined that this issue required Board leadership and action. Although psychologists are among the best trained clinicians in mental health and expert in the rendering of psychological services, the variance in training received in graduate and training programs does not adequately ensure that consumers would be consistently assisted by all of our licensees.

AB 89 is a sensible and flexible solution that enhances the state's suicide prevention efforts and protects consumers of psychological services who rely on psychologists having the basic education and training required to identify and aid a patient with suicidal ideation in finding competent treatment. Additionally, AB 89 accomplishes this using existing Board processes and resources with negligible costs to the State.

For these reasons, the Board asks for your support of AB 89 when it is heard in the Assembly Committee on Appropriations. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the Board's Executive Officer, Antonette Sorrick, at (916) 574-7113. Thank you.

Sincerely,



STEPHEN C. PHILLIPS, JD, PsyD  
President, Board of Psychology

cc: Members of the Assembly Committee on Appropriations  
Assembly Member Marc Levine  
Lisa Murawski, Principal Consultant, Assembly Committee on Appropriations  
Jared Yoshiki, Consultant, Assembly Republican Caucus