

July 28, 2016

The Honorable Lorena S. Gonzalez
California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 2114
Sacramento CA, 95814

RE: SB 1034 (Mitchell) – Health Care Coverage: Autism

Dear Assembly Member Gonzalez:

At its July 27, 2016 meeting, the Board of Psychology (Board) adopted an **Oppose** position on **SB 1034**. This bill would modify requirements to be a qualified autism service professional to include providing behavioral health treatment, such as clinical management and case supervision. The bill would require that a treatment plan be reviewed no more than once every six months, unless a shorter period is recommended by the qualified autism service provider. The bill would extend the operation of these provisions to January 1, 2022.

The Board supports access to reimbursable services for those with Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD) or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). However, we believe that in order to ensure a basic level of competence for those providing the services, oversight in the form of state licensure is crucial to the safe provision of care. If SB 1034 is passed as written, it will mandate insurance providers and Medi-Cal cover services provided by unlicensed and sometimes unqualified providers without consideration for the protection of consumers or the qualifications or lack of qualifications of the providers.

Insurance reimbursement for these services began with the passage of SB 946 (Steinberg) on October 9, 2011. SB 946 required the Department of Managed Health Care (DMHC) to convene an Autism Advisory Task Force (Task Force) by February 1, 2012. The purpose of the Task Force was to develop recommendations regarding medically necessary BHT for individuals with ASD or PDD, as well as the appropriate qualifications, training and supervision for providers of such treatment. The Task Force concluded that all "top level" (undefined) providers should be licensed by the state, and set forth a process for establishing a new professional license for "Licensed Behavioral Health Practitioner." SB 1034 fails to meet the goals of the Task Force.

The Board of Psychology's mission is to advance quality psychological services for Californians by ensuring ethical and legal practice and supporting the evolution of the profession.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this position, please feel free to contact the Board's Executive Officer, Antonette Sorrick, at (916) 574-7113. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'SC Phillips', written over a horizontal line.

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

cc: Senator Holly Mitchell
Assembly Appropriations Committee
Assembly Appropriations Committee Consultant
Assembly Republican Caucus