



March 19, 2022

Assembly Member Isaac Bryan
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0054

RE: AB 1670 Criminal justice: Commission on Alternatives to Incarceration. - SUPPORT

Dear Assembly Member Bryan,

The California Association of Mental Health Peer Run Organizations (CAMHPRO) supports AB 1670. This bill would create the Commission on Alternatives to Incarceration to research and develop policy recommendations for: alternatives to incarceration; alternative crisis response models; reentry; and restorative justice practices and opportunities. The commission would include *“two community representatives with lived experiences that reflect the demographics of people disproportionately incarcerated.”* (Section 6151.d)

CAMHPRO agrees that individuals who identify as Peers and having Lived Experience have the knowledge, expertise, and empathy necessary to develop appropriate and effective alternatives to incarceration. AB 1670 is a step in the right direction in creating a system that truly serves the needs of people living with mental illness and a sustainable, positive path to recovery.

CAMHPRO is a nonprofit, statewide organization consisting of mental health consumer-run organizations, programs, and individual consumer members. CAMHPRO’s mission is “to transform communities and the mental health system throughout California to empower, support, and ensure the rights of consumers, eliminate stigma, and advance self-determination for all those affected by mental health issues, by championing the work of consumer-run organizations.”

Individuals experiencing mental health crises and emergencies are often met with first responders or police officers who are inexperienced in de-escalating a mental health crisis. In a recent article by NPR regarding mental health and police violence almost a quarter of all people killed by police officers in the country have had a diagnosed mental health condition since 2015.¹

It is enhanced community services that make the difference and produce positive results.

AB 1670 promotes voluntary, community-based services to treat individuals experiencing homelessness, poverty, or mental health conditions. Major research indicates that enhanced community services produce positive results in a person’s recovery. The Rand Corporation

¹ Westervelt, E. (2020, September 18). *Mental Health and Police Violence: How Crisis Intervention Teams Are Failing*. National Public Radio.



reported alternative community based treatments can produce positive outcomes for individuals living with severe mental health conditions.²

Additionally, investing in community-based services is a cost effective solution to incarceration. The results of a recent 2012 UCLA study of MHSA Full Service Partnerships found that for every dollar spent on mental health services in California saved 88 cents to the criminal justice and health and housing services systems by reducing the number of arrests, incarcerations, ER visits, and hospitalizations.³

CAMHPRO looks forward to the positive solutions that will come out of this Commission. Thank you for uplifting the peer voice.

Sincerely,

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² Ridgely, M., Borum, R., and Petrila, J. 2001. *The Effectiveness of Involuntary Outpatient Treatment: Empirical Evidence and the Experience of Eight States.* RAND Institute for Civil Justice.

³ UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities and EMT Associates, Inc. "Full Service Partnerships: California's Investment to Support Children and Transition -Age Youth with Serious Emotional Disturbance and Adults and Older Adults with Serious Mental Illness." October 2012.