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Steinberg Applauds Awarding of Prop 63 Suicide Prevention Funds

(Sacramento)—Senate President pro Tem Darrell Steinberg (D-Sacramento), who spearheaded the passage of Proposition 63 (the Mental Health Services Act) issued the following statement on the allocation of \$24 million in award funding for statewide projects targeting suicide prevention:

“These are critical dollars that can literally save the lives of thousands of Californians. Suicide prevention hotlines provide lifelines to survival. These badly-needed funds speak to the heart of Proposition 63 by expanding services, bolstering early identification and intervention, and creating more public awareness about suicide prevention and mental health. The grants will also help create a statewide suicide prevention network to bring services to California communities where there’s the greatest need.

“This money will also broaden prevention and early intervention programs through the new use of electronic media and social networking, providing services into rural and other uncovered areas, and expansion of languages used.

“We all know the economic downturn has created severe budget cutbacks for crisis centers and mental health programs throughout the state. At a time when more and more people are struggling in their daily lives, we need more services, not less, to provide emotional support and assistance for those in crisis. Proposition 63 funds have become one of the very few resources to not just keep these programs afloat but to strengthen and even expand on proven methods of support.”

These awards make up the first round of what will be nearly \$100 million in Prop 63 funds earmarked for statewide projects aimed at preventing suicides, improving student mental health and reducing the stigma of mental health. The second round of awards will be announced in early June. As approved by voters in 2004, Proposition 63 is a personal income tax on millionaires to fund community mental health services.

Senator Steinberg served as Chair of the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission from its inception in July 2005 until September 2007. As Chair, Senator Steinberg worked

closely with the Department of Mental Health and the California Mental Health Directors Association to develop these statewide Prevention and Early Intervention projects.

Suicide is a preventable tragedy. Those in crisis can call the Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255) for assistance.

Please find attached the press release from the California Mental Health Services Authority, the Joint Powers Authority of county mental health departments, announcing the awards.