



April 21, 2011

The Honorable Betsy Butler  
State Capitol, Room 3132  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**SUBJECT: AB 201 (Butler) (As Introduced January 27, 2011)  
Veterans courts – SUPPORT  
Assembly Third Reading File**

Dear Assembly Member Butler:

On behalf of the California Mental Health Directors Association (CMHDA), which represents the directors of public mental health authorities in counties throughout California, I am writing to communicate our support of your Assembly Bill 201, which authorizes superior courts to develop and implement veterans' courts.

The veterans' courts authorized under AB 201 will provide an important alternative to incarceration for many mentally ill offenders who are veterans of the United States military, including those with post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, military sexual trauma, substance abuse, or any mental health problem stemming from military service. CMHDA supports this bill for a number of reasons.

First, the bill provides local flexibility because it authorizes, but does not mandate, that Superior courts develop and implement veterans' courts. Additionally, AB 201 specifies that county participation is voluntary. Second, CMHDA is pleased that the bill requires the presiding judge to develop a plan for establishing the court, in collaboration with the county Board, CAO, and county/court stakeholders, and that the "team" for the veterans' court includes a county mental health liaison.

Finally, CMHDA supports the fact that AB 201 leaves in tact the provision in current law that obligates county mental health treatment services be provided to individuals referred by courts *only to the extent resources are available*. County mental health departments are committed to serving veterans residing in their communities and a number are already collaborating in local veterans' courts. Unfortunately, county mental health authorities do not have anywhere near the financial resources necessary to serve all those in need who meet the eligibility criteria for public mental health services, including those who are veterans. Eroding core mental health funding (Medi-Cal, Realignment revenues) over the past few years has resulted in many counties having to reduce already inadequate mental health services.

(Continued)

For the reasons stated above, CMHDA is pleased to support AB 201. Please do not hesitate to contact me at (916) 556-3477, ext. 112, or [kbarlow@cmhda.org](mailto:kbarlow@cmhda.org) with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kirsten Barlow".

Kirsten Barlow  
Associate Director, Legislation and Public Policy

Cc: Kelly Brooks, California State Association of Counties  
Mickey Richie, Regional Council of Rural Counties