



April 25, 2011

The Honorable Christine Kehoe
State Capitol, Room 5050
Sacramento, CA 95814

**SUBJECT: SB 747 (Kehoe) Continuing education: lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender patients.
As Amended April 4, 2011 – SUPPORT
Set for Hearing in Senate Appropriations Committee on May 4, 2011**

Dear Senator Kehoe:

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 Senate Bill 747, which requires health and mental health professionals to complete cultural competency training in providing care to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals.

Continuing education addressing cultural competency in LGBT health is a critical component to improving the health and mental health of LGBT Californians. While great strides have been made in the mental health field's understanding, sensitivity, and expertise at providing appropriate services and supports to LGBT individuals, studies show that many LGBT persons continue to experience stigma and discrimination from mental health professionals and physicians.

The importance of improving LGBT cultural competency among health care providers is critical since studies suggest that gay, lesbian, and bisexual populations are more likely to report using therapy or counseling than heterosexual groups, and rates of suicide attempts among LGBT youth are 20 to 40% higher than for non-LGBT peers. Upon seeking mental health or other health care services, LGBT individuals should be treated respectfully and sensitively. SB 747 will require health and mental health professionals to complete a modest but important continuing education requirement, which will help ensure their cultural competency in LGBT issues.

For the reasons stated above, CMHDA is pleased to support SB 747. Please do not hesitate to contact me at (916) 556-3477, ext. 112, or kbarlow@cmhda.org with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

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Cc: Honorable Chair and Members, Senate Appropriations Committee
Bob Franzoia, Consultant, Senate Appropriations Committee
Kelly Brooks, California State Association of Counties
Mickey Richie, Regional Council of Rural Counties