

Print on Letterhead

Submit letter to leg.unit@gov.ca.gov and copy daniel.folwarkow@asm.ca.gov and quirka@clccal.org

Sept [redacted], 2024

The Honorable Gavin Newsom, Governor  
State of California  
1021 O Street, Room 9000  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: AB 866 (Blanca Rubio) – Letter of Support**

Dear Governor Newsom:

[redacted] strongly supports AB 866, which will help improve timely access to medication-assisted treatment (MAT) for older youth in the foster care system suffering from opioid use disorder.

Add information about your organization and connection to this issue.

California has seen a devastating explosion of opioid abuse and fatal overdoses among youth. In 2022, an average of twenty-two adolescents, ages 14 to 18, died each week from drug overdoses in the US. Researchers found seven of the counties with the highest rates of death were in California.

Recognizing the need for critical interventions, last year California enacted legislation that allows 16- and 17-year-olds to consent to their own medication-assisted treatment for opioid use disorder, including psychotropic medication, under specific circumstances. Medication-assisted treatment, which combines counseling and behavioral therapies with an opioid agonist such as buprenorphine, is the treatment modality most associated with reduced overdose deaths.

AB 866 will further California's goal to adopt effective, life-saving strategies to address the opioid crisis by clarifying that court approval is not required for 16- and 17-year-old minors in foster care to consent to their own medication-assisted treatment for opioid use disorder.

Court oversight is required for any psychotropic medication provided to minors in foster care. These laws were enacted due to an over-reliance on medication to address behavior challenges and other trauma-related symptoms among youth in foster care, in lieu of a full array of behavioral health services. Usually, this system is beneficial, ensuring notice requirements are met and all interested parties have the opportunity to express their opinion. However, opioid addiction requires a more flexible and immediate response.

Youth in foster care often have histories of trauma that have arisen from both within and outside of the system; turning to self-medication is not uncommon. Additionally, many of these young people have genetic and environmental risk factors that increase their chance of addiction. Far too many teenagers have been lost to opioid overdose. This bill will ensure that older youth in foster care who could benefit from medication-assisted treatment will be able to access it in a timely manner. This change will allow youth to get the immediate help they need and save lives.

For the reasons noted above, we respectfully request your signature on AB 866.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Title]

cc: Assemblymember Blanca Rubio