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**COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA**

August 31, 2021

The Honorable Salud Carbajal  
 U.S. House of Representatives  
 2331 Rayburn House Office Building  
 Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Carbajal:

I am writing on behalf of the County of Santa Barbara in support of H.R. 2611, the *Increasing Behavioral Health Treatment Act*.

Thank you for cosponsoring H.R. 2611, which the County supports in order to expand the maximum number of beds within Institutes for Mental Disease (IMD) beyond the current 16 beds. This is critical for allowing Medicaid reimbursement for individuals who are currently excluded from participation in the program as a result of their mental health placements.

The IMD payment prohibition is an outdated policy that prohibits the federal government from providing Medicaid matching funds to states for services rendered to certain Medicaid-eligible individuals. The IMD exclusion forces Medicaid-supported Specialty Mental Health Services programs to use state and local behavioral health services funds to operate limited facilities and use less secure non-clinical placements for high-needs clients. This is a primary reason for the critical shortage of inpatient psychiatric beds in California today. H.R. 2611 would remove the prohibition on providing Medicaid funding for patients in an IMD and require states to submit a plan to: increase access to outpatient and community-based behavioral health care; increase availability of crisis stabilization services; and improve data sharing and coordination between physical health, mental health and addiction treatment providers and first-responders.

Please continue to work with your colleagues to ensure that the IMD exclusion will be repealed, enabling states like California to better address the mental health care needs of individuals.

Sincerely yours,

Don Gilchrest  
 Washington Representative

DWG: awg