



April 22, 2026

The Honorable Buffy Wicks
Chair, Assembly Appropriations Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 8220
Sacramento, CA 95814

SUBJECT: AB 1669 (Pacheco) – SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Wicks:

Every day, California hospitals see firsthand the growing number of youth and young adults in mental health crises. Since most mental illnesses begin before age 24 and early support can prevent symptoms from becoming worse or disabling, obstacles to early treatment for young people should be minimized or eliminated.

That’s why the California Hospital Association (CHA), on behalf of nearly 400 hospitals and health systems, supports Assembly Bill (AB) 1669 (Pacheco, D-Downey), which would allow college students to take leaves of absence for mental health or medical reasons and later return to their studies.

Nearly half of college students endure mental health challenges, including 37% who struggle with depression and nearly one-third who experience anxiety. Mental health significantly affects people’s daily lives, and research indicates that poor mental health impedes academic performance.

College students should be able to easily access the mental and physical health resources necessary to achieve their personal and academic goals, yet many lack the appropriate tools and institutional support to help them. Following a leave of absence to focus on their health, students should be allowed to return to school to complete their studies. However, this is not the case in all California colleges and universities. Some schools even require students facing mental health crises to completely withdraw from school and then reapply when they are ready to return. AB 1669 would give students the flexibility they need to step away from school to focus on medical or mental health treatment.

AB 1669 would not impose any significant new costs on the state, particularly since several California colleges and universities already voluntarily provide the options the bill would mandate on a statewide basis.

For these reasons, CHA requests your “YES” vote on AB 1669.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Leah Barros", written in a cursive style.

Leah Barros
Consulting Lobbyist, California Hospital Association

cc: The Honorable Blanca Pacheco
The Honorable Members of the Assembly Appropriations Committee
Allegra Kim, Principal Consultant, Assembly Appropriations Committee
Joe Shinstock, Health Policy Consultants, Assembly Republican Caucus