



March 24, 2026

The Honorable Mike Fong
Chair, Assembly Committee on Higher Education
1020 N Street, Room 173
Sacramento, CA 95814

SUBJECT: AB 1669 (Pacheco) – SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Fong:

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, policies must eliminate obstacles to early treatment for young people.

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 return to their studies.

Nearly half of college students endure mental health difficulties, 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 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 do so. 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 and return to their studies.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Leah Barros", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Leah Barros
Consulting Lobbyist, California Hospital Association

cc: The Honorable Blanca Pacheco
Honorable Members of the Assembly Committee on Higher Education
Ellen Cesaretti-Monroy, Consultant, Assembly Committee on Higher Education
Lyndsay Mitchell, Consultant, Assembly Republican Caucus