



May 28, 2026

The Honorable Akilah Weber Pierson, MD
Chair, Senate Health Committee
1020 N Street, Room 3310
Sacramento, CA 95814

SUBJECT: AB 1970 (Harabedian) – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Weber Pierson:

Hospitals are on the front lines of the mental health and substance use disorder crisis in California, with as many as one in three inpatient hospitalizations and one in five emergency department visits now involving patients with behavioral health disorders. When timely access to medically necessary care is delayed or denied, patients suffer, and medical outcomes are compromised.

Given the growing number of individuals seeking behavioral health treatment, the California Hospital Association (CHA), on behalf of nearly 400 hospitals and health systems, recognizes the importance of ensuring patients can access the most effective treatment without delays. **That's why CHA supports Assembly Bill (AB) 1970 (Harabedian, D-Pasadena), which would prohibit health care plans and insurers from requiring step therapy protocols for medications used to treat a serious mental illness or substance use disorder.**

Step therapy policies require patients to try insurer-preferred medications before obtaining the treatment originally prescribed by their provider. For individuals living with behavioral health conditions, these practices delay access to effective treatment, disrupt the recovery process, and increase the risk of a behavioral health crisis. AB 1970 would ensure patients could immediately receive the treatment their provider determines is the most appropriate, without unnecessary administrative barriers that could delay care.

Behavioral health medications are not interchangeable and individual responses vary widely. By allowing patients to begin with the most clinically appropriate medication, AB 1970 would improve timely access to care and improved treatment outcomes for individuals living with a serious mental illness or substance use disorder.

For these reasons, CHA strongly urges your “AYE” vote on AB 1970.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Meghan Loper", is written in a cursive style.

Meghan Loper
Consulting Lobbyist, California Hospital Association

cc: The Honorable John Harabedian
The Honorable Members of the Senate Health Committee
Vince Marchand, Principal Consultant, Senate Health Committee
Joe Parra, Health Policy Consultant, Senate Republican Caucus