



June 9, 2026

The Honorable Mia Bonta
Chair, Assembly Health Committee
1020 N Street, Room 390
Sacramento, CA 95814

SUBJECT: SB 989 (Blakespear) — SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Bonta:

Hospitals are on the front lines of the behavioral health crisis in California. They stabilize and treat people with a range of mental health needs in hospital emergency departments, psychiatric units of general medical hospitals, and freestanding psychiatric hospitals. They regularly see the tremendous challenges people with the most serious and disabling symptoms face in achieving independence and recovery.

That’s why the California Hospital Association (CHA), on behalf of nearly 400 hospitals and health systems, supports Senate Bill (SB) 989 (Blakespear, D-Carlsbad). This bill would authorize first responders to directly refer people with a serious mental illness whom they repeatedly encounter to the county to initiate the Community Assistance, Recovery, and Empowerment (CARE) Act process.

The CARE Act of 2022 provides a new process, overseen by California courts, that includes individualized treatment and housing support for those living with a serious mental disorder. It can help people, including those with schizophrenia and other illnesses with psychotic symptoms, break the cycle of repeated hospitalizations, arrests, and homelessness and prevent them from being placed on a conservatorship and having their personal independence restricted. Since its enactment, thousands of individuals have been connected to the CARE Act process.

First responders repeatedly encounter the same individuals who seem to be falling through the cracks and are unable to maintain their health and safety. SB 989 would give paramedics, emergency medical technicians, mobile crisis response workers, and homeless outreach workers a direct way to refer them to the county for CARE Act services, rather than pursue a time-intensive court petition. Within 30 days of receiving a referral, the county behavioral health agency would be required to review the request and determine whether to file a CARE Act petition with the local courts.

For these reasons, **CHA asks for your “AYE” vote on SB 989.**

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 Catherine Blakespear
The Honorable Members of the Assembly Health Committee
Eliza Brooks, Senior Consultant, Assembly Health Committee
Justin Boman, Consultant, Assembly Republican Caucus