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AB 1860 Sample Support Letter
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The Honorable Jim Wood
Chair, Assembly Health Committee
1020 N Street, Room 390
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 1860 (Ward) Substance abuse treatment: certification – SUPPORT

Dear Chair Wood:

On behalf of [INSERT ORGANIZATION], we are pleased to support AB 1860 (Ward). This bill would exempt graduate student interns participating in supervised internships affiliated with graduate university programs in psychology, social work, marriage and family therapy, or counseling and who are completing their supervised practicum hours from having to register with a substance use disorder counselor (SUD) certifying organization.

In 2021, the CDC reported that there were over 100,000 overdose deaths in the United States. Over 75,000 of those deaths were a result of synthetic opioids/fentanyl, and 10,585 of those overdoses occurred in California. At the same time, California is facing a critical shortage of SUD treatment workforce able to handle the increase of individuals needing treatment.
Under current state law, all individuals who are not licensed professionals of the healing arts (LPHA) are required to register with a SUD counselor certification organization in order to provide counseling services. While this registration requirement is intended to protect clients and ensure ethics and confidentiality—the impact of the requirement is that it disincentivizes and discourages qualified marriage and family trainees and other master-level clinicians completing their required graduate school practicums from working in SUD treatment programs by having to also register with a certifying organization as if they were on the career path to become a certified SUD counselor.
The practical impact is that it reduces the available workforce at SUD treatment programs and also prevents the pipeline of marriage and family therapists, professional clinical counselors, and social workers from gaining key experience in treating SUD conditions. As the state strives towards integrated care for co-occurring mental health and SUD conditions—it is critical that the workforce have competencies in care of both conditions. It is imperative that the state support more than just an SUD counselor career path, but also an SUD LPHA career path.

As California faces a workforce crisis and significant need for SUD services, AB 1860 is critical and timely. For these reasons we are pleased to support AB 1860 (Ward) and urge your “AYE” vote on the measure. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to reach out to [INSERT CONTACT INFORMATION].

Sincerely,

[Insert Signature]

cc: Honorable Members, Assembly Health Committee
Caleb Beaver, Office of Assemblymember Chris Ward
Judy Babcock, Senior Consultant, Assembly Health Committee