

Soon to be Disability Rights California

September 10, 2008

Honorable Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor of California
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 1887 (Beall) – REQUEST FOR SIGNATURE

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger:

Protection & Advocacy, Inc. (PAI), a non-profit advocacy organization that advances the human and legal rights of people with disabilities, supports AB 1887. We respectfully urge your signature of this bill.

Existing law provides for limited mental health parity in health care insurance/managed care plans. Under existing law, a health care service plan contract and a health insurance policy are required to provide coverage for the diagnosis and treatment of severe mental illnesses for a person of any age. This treatment must be provided under the same terms and conditions as other services. These terms and conditions include maximum lifetime benefits, copayments, and individual and family deductibles.

Existing law does not define "severe mental illnesses" for purposes of the mental health parity requirement, but describes it as including several conditions.

This bill expands the coverage requirement for certain health care service plan contracts and health insurance policies issued, amended, or renewed on or after January 1, 2008. Coverage will include the mental illness diagnosis and treatment for a person of any age and use the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual IV definitions.

A common definition is necessary in order to insure that mental health parity

requirements apply to any diagnosed serious mental illness. A common definition will avoid attempts by insurers and health care service plans to adopt narrow and restrictive definitions of mental illness.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about our position on this bill.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Margaret Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Margaret Johnson, Esq.
Protection & Advocacy, Inc.
Advocacy Director

CC: Honorable Jim Beall, California State Assembly

CC: Kathleen Finnigan, Legislative Director, Assembly Member Beall's Office