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**AB-738 Community mental health services: mental health boards.** (2021-2022)

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Date Published: 09/19/2022 02:00 PM

**Assembly Bill No. 738**

**CHAPTER 378**

An act to amend Section 5604 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to mental health.

[ Approved by Governor September 17, 2022. Filed with Secretary of State September 17, 2022. ]

**LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST**

AB 738, Nguyen. Community mental health services: mental health boards.

Existing law, the Bronzan-McCorquodale Act, governs the organization and financing of community mental health services for persons with mental disorders in every county through locally administered and locally controlled community mental health programs. Existing law requires each community mental health service to have a mental health board consisting of members who are appointed by the governing body, and encourages counties to appoint individuals who have experience with and knowledge of the mental health system. Existing law requires at least 50% of the board membership to be consumers, or the parents, spouses, siblings, or adult children of consumers. Existing law specifies the duties of mental health boards, including acting in an advisory role to the governing body.

This bill would require at least one member of the board to be a veteran or veteran advocate in counties with a population of 100,000 or more. In counties with a population of fewer than 100,000, the bill would require these counties to give a strong preference to appointing at least one member of the board who is a veteran or veteran advocate. By placing a new requirement on counties, this bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that the bill contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement for those costs shall be made pursuant to the statutory provisions noted above.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: yes

**THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:**

**SECTION 1.** Section 5604 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is amended to read:

**5604.** (a) (1) Each community mental health service shall have a mental health board consisting of 10 to 15 members, depending on the preference of the county, appointed by the governing body, except that boards in counties with a population of fewer than 80,000 may have a minimum of five members. A county with more than five supervisors shall have at least the same number of members as the size of its board of supervisors. This section does not limit the ability of the governing body to increase the number of members above 15.

(2) (A) The board shall serve in an advisory role to the governing body, and one member of the board shall be a member of the local governing body. Local mental health boards may recommend appointees to the county supervisors. The board membership should reflect the diversity of the client population in the county to the extent possible.

(B) Fifty percent of the board membership shall be consumers, or the parents, spouses, siblings, or adult children of consumers, who are receiving or have received mental health services. At least 20 percent of the total membership shall be consumers, and at least 20 percent shall be families of consumers.

(C) (i) In counties with a population of 100,000 or more, at least one member of the board shall be a veteran or veteran advocate. In counties with a population of fewer than 100,000, the county shall give a strong preference to appointing at least one member of the board who is a veteran or a veteran advocate.

(ii) To comply with clause (i), a county shall notify its county veterans service officer about vacancies on the board, if a county has a veterans service officer.

(D) In addition to the requirements in subparagraphs (B) and (C), counties are encouraged to appoint individuals who have experience with, and knowledge of, the mental health system. This would include members of the community that engage with individuals living with mental illness in the course of daily operations, such as representatives of county offices of education, large and small businesses, hospitals, hospital districts, physicians practicing in emergency departments, city police chiefs, county sheriffs, and community and nonprofit service providers.

(3) (A) In counties with a population that is fewer than 80,000, at least one member shall be a consumer and at least one member shall be a parent, spouse, sibling, or adult child of a consumer who is receiving, or has received, mental health services.

(B) Notwithstanding subparagraph (A), a board in a county with a population that is fewer than 80,000 that elects to have the board exceed the five-member minimum permitted under paragraph (1) shall be required to comply with paragraph (2).

(b) The mental health board shall review and evaluate the local public mental health system, pursuant to Section 5604.2, and advise the governing body on community mental health services delivered by the local mental health agency or local behavioral health agency, as applicable.

(c) The term of each member of the board shall be for three years. The governing body shall equitably stagger the appointments so that approximately one-third of the appointments expire in each year.

(d) If two or more local agencies jointly establish a community mental health service pursuant to Article 1 (commencing with Section 6500) of Chapter 5 of Division 7 of Title 1 of the Government Code, the mental health board for the community mental health service shall consist of an additional two members for each additional agency, one of whom shall be a consumer or a parent, spouse, sibling, or adult child of a consumer who has received mental health services.

(e) (1) Except as provided in paragraph (2), a member of the board or the member's spouse shall not be a full-time or part-time county employee of a county mental health service, an employee of the State Department of Health Care Services, or an employee of, or a paid member of the governing body of, a mental health contract agency.

(2) A consumer of mental health services who has obtained employment with an employer described in paragraph (1) and who holds a position in which the consumer does not have any interest, influence, or authority over any financial or contractual matter concerning the employer may be appointed to the board. The member shall abstain from voting on any financial or contractual issue concerning the member's employer that may come before the board.

(f) Members of the board shall abstain from voting on any issue in which the member has a financial interest as defined in Section 87103 of the Government Code.

(g) If it is not possible to secure membership as specified in this section from among persons who reside in the county, the governing body may substitute representatives of the public interest in mental health who are not full-time or part-time employees of the county mental health service, the State Department of Health Care Services, or on the staff of, or a paid member of the governing body of, a mental health contract agency.

(h) The mental health board may be established as an advisory board or a commission, depending on the preference of the county.

(i) For purposes of this section, "veteran advocate" means either a parent, spouse, or adult child of a veteran, or an individual who is part of a veterans organization, including the Veterans of Foreign Wars or the American Legion.

**SEC. 2.** If the Commission on State Mandates determines that this act contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement to local agencies and school districts for those costs shall be made pursuant to Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) of Division

