



Assemblymember Gail Pellerin, 28th Assembly District

## AB 1907 – CHILD WELFARE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH OUTCOMES

As Introduced 01.24.2024

### BACKGROUND

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Child welfare is a continuum of services designed to ensure that children are safe, including out-of-home placement (i.e. foster care), family maintenance, kinship care, and adoption.

The Child Welfare System Improvement and Accountability Act (AB 636, Steinberg, 2001) aimed to improve data collection and reporting on the child welfare system. The Act's goals were met by the Child Welfare Indicators Project, a research project between UC Berkeley and the Department of Social Services which has driven continuous quality improvement in the child welfare system since its inception. While the Child Welfare Indicators Project collects holistic data on academic performance, caregiver resources, and supportive care environments, a critical gap is that the Child Welfare Indicators Project does not include behavioral health outcomes.

### PROBLEM

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Children and youth navigating California's child welfare system encounter distinct behavioral health challenges, associated with traumatic experiences and the system involvement itself. Up to 80% of children navigating child welfare systems display significant mental health issues, a stark contrast to only 18-22% among the general population. Additionally, 45% reported using alcohol or drugs within the last six months and 35% met the criteria for a substance use disorder. The lack of comprehensive statewide behavioral health data impairs California's ability to create services and supports that meet the unique needs of these vulnerable youth.

### SOLUTION

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AB 1907 ensures that the California Child and Family Service Review System includes behavioral health outcomes, holding counties accountable for improving wellbeing across our child welfare systems. This bill leverages existing Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) data to better understand and respond to foster children and youth's wellbeing, fostering resilience and positive long-term outcomes.

Specifically, this bill amends the California Child and Family Service Review System to incorporate behavioral health outcomes measured by CANS data. AB 1907 will ensure holistic tracking, promote targeted services for children and youth navigating the child welfare system, enable a nuanced assessment of needs and strengths, and foster targeted improvements.

The bill's comprehensive approach reaches all 58 counties, promising enhanced behavioral health services and improved outcomes statewide.

### SUPPORT

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Steinberg Institute (Sponsor)

### CONTACT

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