



March 24, 2026

Al Rowlett
 Chair – Commission for Behavioral Health
 1812 9th Street
 Sacramento, CA 95811

Re: Commission Meeting (Day 2) - March 27, 2026
 Item # 5 Future Committee Structure

Dear Chair Rowlett and Commissioners,

We write as community partners, service providers, advocates, and organizations working closely with California’s diverse behavioral health communities, including

partners engaged with the California Reducing Disparities Project (CRDP). We represent consumers, family members, people of color, immigrants and refugees, and people from the LGBTQ+ community. We appreciate the Commission's continued commitment to advancing equity, accountability, and community engagement within California's behavioral health system.

We are writing to respectfully express our strong concern regarding the proposal to continue to combine the **Cultural and Linguistic Competence Committee (CLCC)** and the **Client and Family Leadership Committee (CFLC)** into a single committee. While we recognize the Commission's efforts to streamline its work, we believe these two committees serve distinct and critical purposes that merit focused attention and separate spaces for dialogue and policy development.

The **CLCC** has historically provided an essential forum for addressing disparities in behavioral health access and outcomes among communities that have long experienced systemic inequities, including BIPOC, LGBTQ+, immigrant, refugee, and linguistically diverse communities. This committee plays an important role in advancing culturally responsive policy and elevating community-defined evidence practices that reflect the lived experiences of the communities most affected by disparities.

The **CFLC**, in turn, centers the voices and leadership of clients and families who interact directly with the behavioral health system. This committee provides a vital platform for individuals with lived experience and their families to inform policy, identify system gaps, and ensure that behavioral health services remain responsive, accountable, and person-centered.

Although there is meaningful overlap between these constituencies, each committee addresses a broad and complex set of issues that require dedicated time, attention, and engagement. Combining these committees runs the risk of limiting the depth of discussion, reducing opportunities for community participation, and diluting the distinct perspectives that each committee was designed to elevate. This was illustrated recently at the last CFC committee meeting when public comment was often limited to one minute, and there was not enough time to finish discussing and hearing public comment on the important topic of "Effects of BHSA on Peer Run Organizations and Peer Services".

The rationale for combining these two committees is that it is difficult to obtain a quorum to allow business to be conducted. It was still difficult to reach a quorum at the combined CFC committee meetings, so this strategy did not solve the quorum problem. We have provided an attachment to this letter for suggestions for ensuring quorum at future meetings. None of these suggestions were attempted before going forward with combining the two committees.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Commission to reconsider the decision and **re-establish the CLCC and CFLC as separate committees**. Maintaining both committees will strengthen the Commission’s ability to meaningfully engage communities, address disparities, and uphold its commitment to inclusive and effective behavioral health governance.

We remain deeply committed to working collaboratively with the Commission to advance equitable behavioral health policies and systems across California. Thank you for your consideration and for your continued leadership.

Sincerely,



Josefina Alvarado Mena
CEO
Safe Passages



Stacie Hiramoto, MSW
Executive Director
Racial & Ethnic Mental Health
Disparities Coalition

Solicia Aguilar
Program Director
LGBTQ Connection
Napa/Sonoma Counties

Eba Laye
President
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Los Angeles County

Claudia Cendejas
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Humanidad Therapy and Educational
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The Fresno Center
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Dr. Lisa Pion-Berlin, ACSW, ACHT
President and CEO
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John Alita
Executive Director
San Joaquin Pride Center
San Joaquin County

Jessica Wilson (Cruz), MPA/HS
Chief Executive Officer
NAMI California

Lishaun Francis
Senior Director, Behavioral Health
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Lynn Rivas, Ph.D.
Executive Director
California Association of Mental
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Pysay Phinith
Program Director
MARU (Formerly Korean
Community Center of the East Bay)
Alameda County

Seng S. Yang
Director
Hmong Cultural Center of
Butte County

Isaias Guzman
Associate Director of Programs
California LGBTQ Health and
Human Services Network

Ruqayya Ahmad
Senior Policy Manager
California Pan-Ethnic Health Network

Robyn Gantsweg (she/her)
Peer Self-Advocacy Program Manager
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Adrienne Shilton
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Jacqueline Tran, DrPH, MPH
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Sally Douglas Arce
Family Member/Community Member
Alameda County

Stephanie Chang, ACSW
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Attachment: List of Recommendations that Address the Issue of Reaching
Quorum for Commission Committee Meetings

Recommendations to Address the Issue of Reaching Quorum for Commission Committee Meetings

One primary reason behind the push for one combined committee instead of the separate Client and Family Leadership Committee (CFLC) and Cultural and Linguistic Competence Committee (CLCC) is that it was difficult to reach a quorum at committee meetings. The following is a list of recommendations to ensure a quorum could be reached at every CFLC and CLCC meeting. **It should be noted that:**

- None of the recommendations below was attempted or instituted before moving to combine the two committees into one.
- Combining the two committees did not alleviate the difficulty in reaching a quorum for the combined committee.

Recommendations

- **Set the meeting dates and times in advance.** When recruiting for the Committees, provide the dates and say that candidates must sign a form stating they are available and agree to attend the majority of the meetings for the next two years (i.e. six out of eight meetings).
- **Have at least two (preferably more) “alternate members”.** These individuals are not voting members but may be called upon to join the committee if a member is taken off the committee for any reason. The alternate members are encouraged to attend all committee meetings.
- **Conduct listening sessions and surveys with the community** to develop the characteristics, experience, knowledge-base, etc. that members should possess for appointment to a specific committee.
- **Establish a rule that if a member misses two meetings in a row, they are automatically taken off the committee*.** One of the alternate members who represents communities that the member taken off the committee was representing is appointed by the Chair to the committee.

*Member may appeal this action. Extenuating circumstances (determined by the Chair) may allow member to remain on the Committee. This is not automatic – an appeal must be filed.