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August 16, 2018

Senator Holly Mitchell
Chair, Senate Budget Committee
State Capitol, Room 5019
Sacramento, CA 95814

Assemblymember Phil Ting
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
State Capitol, Room 6026
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 1810 – Support

Dear Chair Mitchell and Chair Ting,

On behalf of the California Women's Law Center (CWLC), we write in support of Assembly Bill 1810, the mental health diversion law recently passed by the California Legislature and signed into law by the Governor.

AB 1810 makes pre-trial diversion available for all defendants with mental illness. The law permits, but does not require, a judge to divert a defendant into mental health treatment in certain situations. Of course, a judge still retains absolute discretion to deny diversion if they believe it is unsafe or not in the interest of the community.

We urge you not to revise AB 1810 in any way that would limit access to diversion for mentally ill defendants. Specifically, we oppose changes that would allow counties to opt out of the program and put their own limits on who is eligible. Historically, when counties are given the option not to participate in this type of program, many opt out.

We also oppose any implementation of the program that imposes a criminal conviction for people who successfully complete treatment and fulfill the terms of diversion. Doing so would undermine the intent of the program by forcing a vulnerable person to face numerous obstacles put in place by having a criminal record. These changes would also counteract the purpose of the law by increasing the burden on state prisons and hospitals.

CWLC's mission is to advance the potential of women and girls through transformative litigation, policy advocacy and education. CWLC understands the importance of mental health treatment in the well-being of women and their families.

For these reasons, the California Women's Law Center urges you to support the implementation of AB 1810 as passed.

Sincerely,



Betsy Butler