

Date of Hearing: May 26, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON RULES
Blanca Pacheco, Chair
ACR 209 (Elhawary) – As Introduced May 21, 2026

SUBJECT: Behavioral Health Awareness Month.

SUMMARY: Recognizes May 2026 as Behavioral Health Awareness Month in California to enhance public awareness of behavioral health needs across the lifespan. Specifically, **this resolution** makes the following legislative findings:

- 1) Mental illness is a health condition that impacts our emotional, psychological, and social well-being, and affects how an individual thinks, feels, and acts, including how they handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Substance use disorder is the persistent use of drugs despite substantial harm and adverse consequences to self and others.
- 2) Behavioral health is the term that recognizes the combination of mental illness and substance use disorder that often impacts an individual.
- 3) Nearly 20 percent of children and youth between 3 and 17 years of age, inclusive, in the United States develop a mental, emotional, developmental, or substance use disorder each year.
- 4) In California, there are nearly 45,000 children in the foster care system, and many youth still exit care without the support and guidance they need to successfully transition out of the system.
- 5) An estimated 70 percent of all youth in the juvenile justice system have at least one mental health condition and at least 20 percent live with severe mental illness that is usually undiagnosed, misdiagnosed, untreated, or ineffectively treated, thus leaving those detained in the juvenile justice system in a vulnerable condition.
- 6) An estimated 60 percent of youth in juvenile facilities met criteria for substance use disorder in the year before entering custody.
- 7) Adults and older adults living with mental illness or substance use disorders often experience additional barriers to care, including stigma, social isolation, under-diagnosis, and fragmented access to behavioral health services.
- 8) Behavioral health challenges among adults—particularly those experiencing homelessness, unemployment, or chronic illness—can lead to compounded health disparities and require comprehensive, integrated care.
- 9) The integration of behavioral health care, including mental health and substance use treatment, into primary care, housing, and aging services is critical to meeting the needs of California’s diverse and growing adult and older adult populations.
- 10) Older adults are at increased risk for co-occurring behavioral health conditions such as depression, anxiety, and substance use disorders due to life transitions, grief, cognitive decline, and chronic medical conditions.

- 11) Although mental illness impacts all people, many of those in lower income communities receive less care and poorer quality of care, and often lack access to culturally competent care, thereby resulting in mental health disparities.
- 12) There is a need to improve public awareness of mental illness and to strengthen local and national awareness of brain diseases so that all people with mental illness may receive adequate and appropriate treatment that will result in their becoming fully functioning members of society.
- 13) There is a need to reduce the stigma around mental illness and substance use disorder, so that all people with a mental illness are encouraged to reach out to their community and seek treatment without fear of isolation and judgment.

FISCAL EFFECT: This resolution is keyed non-fiscal by Legislative Counsel.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file

Opposition

None on file

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