



LITTLE HOOVER COMMISSION

May 23, 2003

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Executive Director

The Honorable Darrell Steinberg
Member, California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 2114
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SUPPORT FOR ASSEMBLY BILL 380

Dear Assemblyman Steinberg:

The Little Hoover Commission supports AB 380, the measure you have authored that would establish statutory outcome measures for the children's system of care program. The Commission supports this measure based on findings and recommendations in its October 2001 report, *Young Hearts & Minds: Making a Commitment to Children's Mental Health*.

In its study, the Commission found that nearly 850,000 children each year in California experiences a mental disorder. And too many of them suffer through their mental health needs without the benefit of appropriate, compassionate and holistic care. Without adequate care, many end up in the juvenile justice system, drop out of school and carry their troubles into adulthood. There is significant evidence that with appropriate care and support -- consistently and timely provided -- these children can better manage their behavior and address their emotional needs.

The children's system of care program, implemented by the Department of Mental Health in 53 of California's 58 counties, serves approximately 10,000 children and youth with mental health needs. AB 380 would enable these counties to systematically collect and maintain data that demonstrates the outcomes of the CSOC program. The Commission supports the system of care approach because the program strives to provide care that recognizes the unique and holistic needs of these special children and their families.

For these reasons, the Commission is taking an active support position on this measure. As the bill moves through the committee process, I will be writing letters on behalf of the Commission to legislators urging aye votes. If you feel my presence and testimony at a hearing would be helpful, please let me know, and I will make every attempt to be available.

If you have any questions or if I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

James P. Mayer
Executive Director

c: All Commissioners