



State of California

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March 30, 2006

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The Honorable Alan Lowenthal
Member, California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 3048
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SUPPORT FOR SENATE BILL 1356
As amended March 27, 2006**

Dear Senator Lowenthal:

The Little Hoover Commission supports SB 1356, the measure you have authored that would require the Department of Mental Health to implement a statewide suicide prevention plan.

In 2000, the Commission reviewed California's mental health system. In its review, the Commission found that too often Californians were not receiving the care and support necessary to address their needs. In response, the Commission recommended that the Department of Mental Health become a champion for improved access to quality mental health services. Specifically, the Commission recommended that the department aggressively identify barriers to care and advise the governor and Legislature how to remove those barriers.

Suicide is a leading challenge for California. Research indicates that most victims had a diagnosable mental illness and suffered needlessly, at the cost of their lives. And thousands of families annually are impacted by this problem. Based on recommendations in its 2000 report, *Being There: Making a Commitment to Mental Health*, the Commission supports SB 1356.

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.

Sincerely,

Nancy Lyons
Acting Executive Director

c: Commissioners