



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

SEP 25 2022

To the Members of the California State Senate:

I am returning Senate Bill 999 without my signature.

This bill would require health plans and health insurers that review coverage requests for mental health and substance use disorder treatment to employ reviewers having the same experience and credentials as the requesting provider in these cases.

I share the author's goal of ensuring that patients are able to receive the behavioral health care they need, when they need it. Two years ago, I signed SB 855 (Wiener, Chapter 151, Statutes of 2020), a landmark update to California's mental health parity statutes. SB 855 and forthcoming regulations implementing the law seek to address the issues targeted by this bill by requiring the use of unbiased mental health and substance use disorder clinical standards in coverage reviews and mandating the appropriate training and oversight of staff performing those reviews. Implementation of SB 855 is underway, and the industry is in the process of adapting to California's stringent new requirements. As such, this bill is premature and unnecessary at this time.

Sincerely,

Gavin Newsom

