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California Civil Liberties Advocacy  
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Tuesday, April 23, 2019

**Submitted Electronically**

Assembly Member Wendy Carrillo  
California State Capitol  
Room 4167  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 46 (Carrillo) – SUPPORT**

Dear Assemblymember Carrillo:

I am writing on behalf of the California Civil Liberties Advocacy to express our support for Assembly Bill 46, which removes dehumanizing language from California statutes which only stigmatize and discriminate against people who have mental health issues.

“Mental health” refers to our emotional, psychological and social wellbeing and it affects how we think, feel and act. Maintaining mental health is critical in ensuring that people can effectively function and perform daily activities such as: working, attending school, participating in positive relationships, and adapting to changes and adversity. The California Health Care Foundation reports nearly 1 in 6 adults have a mental health need and approximately 1 in 20 Californians suffer from a serious mental illness. While mental health challenges continue to impact millions of individuals every day, many misconceptions exist about people living with mental illnesses.

Widely held beliefs about people with mental health issues erroneously suggest that such ones are incapable of being able to thrive among society and lead productive lives. This train of thought has contributed to inhumane treatment and the violation the rights and liberties of people with mental health issues from time immemorial. As statutes often reflect the time in which they were created, language in California law includes obsolete terminology referencing people with mental illness and disabilities. These outdated terms only perpetuate stigma and fuel widespread misconceptions

*“Indifference to personal liberty is but the precursor of the state’s hostility to it.”  
— Justice Kennedy, U.S. Supreme Court*

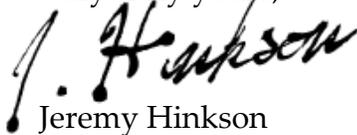
about such ones. The current language in only continues to cause shame, convey negative judgment, and reinforce negative stereotypes about people with mental health difficulties.

Language reflects but also has the ability to shape our thoughts. The type of language we use focuses our perception and attention on particular aspects of reality, structures, cognitive processes, and, to a certain degree, regulates our social relationships.<sup>1</sup> Referring to any person by a term that attributes an outcast or lower social standard to their inherent worth has no place in the realm of public policy.

Terms such as, “crazy, lunatic, insane, feeble-minded, mentally defective, and abnormal,” only strip citizens of their dignity. Replacing these terms with language that speaks to the person first and their condition second, AB 46 will encourage acceptance of the normalcy and reality of widespread mental health challenges. All Californians have been or will be touched by mental health difficulties in their lifetime. It is, therefore, imperative that California law recognize such ones as people with rights and dignity, as all Californians enjoy.

For all of the abovementioned reasons, the CCLA supports AB 46 (Carrillo).

Very truly yours,



Jeremy Hinkson

President, California Civil Liberties Advocacy

Cc: Assembly Judiciary Committee (*Submitted Electronically*)

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<sup>1</sup> HOW THE LANGUAGE YOU SPEAK INFLUENCES THE WAY YOU THINK. PSYCHOLOGY TODAY, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/hide-and-see/201808/how-the-language-you-speak-influences-the-way-you-think> (last visited Apr 23, 2019)