

STATE CAPITOL  
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814  
(916) 651-4025



**For Immediate Release: September 28, 2022**  
**Contact: Lerna Shirinian, (818) 409-0400**

### **Governor Newsom Signs Senator Portantino's Bill Addressing Mental Health Provider Shortage**

**Sacramento, CA** – Senate Bill 1002, a measure authored by State Senator Anthony J. Portantino (D – Burbank), seeks to address California's mental health provider shortage. SB 1002 authorizes qualified social workers to offer assessment and psychotherapy for mental or behavioral health issues in order to provide additional resources to injured workers in need of immediate care. Governor Newsom has signed the measure into law.

**“Mental health needs among workers have increased significantly,” stated Senator Portantino. “However, the number of professionals who are available to provide care have decreased. SB 1002 will enhance our state’s ability to address the mental and behavioral health care needs of California’s workforce by including licensed social workers in the workers’ compensation provider networks. I thank the Governor for his signature on this important health care measure.”**

Injured workers must often wait for extensive periods before seeking full psychiatric treatment due to a scarcity of available providers. These delays in health care and evaluation often result in the injured worker's delayed return to work and increased costs to the system. States such as Texas and New York have mobilized Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSWs) to help fill the gap, but workers' compensation law in California does not provide for listing of LCSWs in the networks as providers that are permitted to assess, evaluate, and treat mental illness among affected workers.

**“Small businesses and their employees have greatly been impacted by the pandemic, including our first responders and frontline workers. We are grateful to the Governor for signing SB 1002, which will provide more mental health resources to our workers’ compensation system,” announced Scott Hauge, President of Small Business California, a statewide association that represents the interests of nearly 5,000 small and micro businesses.**

**“We have a significant shortage of mental health care professionals in our state’s workers’ compensation system where currently employees of small businesses must wait weeks or months to get an appointment. Many thanks to Senator Portantino for authoring his SB 1002 so that our employees’ mental health care needs will be evaluated, assessed and treated in a timelier manner resulting in the employee being able to return to work sooner,” he added.**

SB 1002 authorizes qualified LCSWs to provide assessment and psychotherapy to affected workers suffering from mental or behavioral health issues, thereby providing additional and readily available resources within their licensure to injured workers in need of immediate mental health consultation and services.

SB 1002 adds Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSWs) who meet the licensure requirements of the State Board of Behavioral Sciences to the list of available provider types. This will enable the Primary Treating Physician (PTP) to view LCSWs in the list of available mental health providers, thereby allowing the PTP to directly refer an injured worker to a LCSW in the same manner as the PTP may currently refer an injured worker to a psychologist or psychiatrist for work-related mental health services. This bill does not authorize LCSWs to act as a treating physician in the workers’ compensation system – it only authorizes LCSWs to evaluate and treat injured workers only upon referral by a physician.

**“We are thrilled with the Governor’s continuous commitment to innovative leadership and his decision to sign SB 1002 into law,” commented Deborah Son, Executive Director of the National Association of Social Workers - California Chapter (NASW-CA). “It is decisions like his and those of leaders such as Senator Portantino that bring groundbreaking change to the ways in which community health needs are met. It has been far too long that individuals on the frontlines and working professionals more broadly have been suffering without access to timely and effective behavioral health care. At a baseline, injured workers, including essential workers, were often waiting for extensive time periods before being able to receive mental health treatment due to a scarcity of available providers. We are thrilled to share that our robust workforce of Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSWs) will now be able to more swiftly provide mental health services in the Workers’ Compensation system thanks to their vision and actions.”**

###