

Date of Hearing: June 23, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT, SPORTS, AND TOURISM

Christopher M. Ward, Chair

ACR 204 (Quirk-Silva) – As Introduced May 13, 2026

SUBJECT: Behavioral health and arts

SUMMARY: ACR 204 recognizes and affirms the important role of artists, arts organizations, creative arts therapists, and arts for health initiatives in supporting behavioral health, promoting recovery, strengthening community resilience, and contributing to public safety. This resolution also encourages and recognizes exploration, support, and integration of arts and behavioral health within California’s health care, behavioral health, and community-based systems.

Specifically, **this resolution** makes the following legislative findings:

- 1) California, like the rest of the United States, is experiencing a significant behavioral health crisis, with increasing rates of anxiety, depression, trauma, and substance use disorders affecting residents across all age groups.
- 2) According to national and state data, a substantial portion of youth, adults, and older adults experience a stigmatizing behavioral health condition each year.
- 3) The prevalence of anxiety and depressive symptoms remains high, underscoring the urgent need for innovative, accessible, and community-based behavioral health interventions.
- 4) Participation in the arts has been widely recognized as an effective tool for promoting well-being and brain health, as well as reducing social isolation and loneliness.
- 5) Arts for health initiatives have emerged as evidence-based and clinically supported interventions that help address symptoms of stress, trauma, anxiety, and related behavioral health challenges.
- 6) Research in neuroscience and brain health demonstrates that engagement in the arts can stimulate cognitive function, strengthen neural connectivity, support memory and emotional processing, and promote overall brain health across the lifespan, making arts participation a valuable preventive strategy for mental well-being and healthy aging.
- 7) The California Behavioral Health Association and California for the Arts collaborate to elevate dialogue and best practices for integrating behavioral health and arts for Californians.
- 8) Preventive approaches that integrate the arts may help reduce reliance on more costly crisis and clinical interventions by addressing social and emotional well-being before conditions worsen.
- 9) These initiatives, when implemented as trauma-informed practices, have been shown to improve emotional regulation, reduce symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, and provide meaningful avenues for self-expression and healing.

- 10) Artists and culture bearers are trusted community members that can be uniquely positioned to reach populations that are historically underserved or less likely to engage with traditional systems of care.
- 11) In collaboration with health care and providers, public health agencies, and mental health practitioners, artists and culture bearers can support upstream health promotion efforts by delivering arts-based well-being programs that complement, rather than replace, clinical services.
- 12) Federal agencies, including the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and the United States Department of Defense, have successfully integrated creative arts therapies into treatment programs for veterans and active-duty service members.
- 13) Expanding access to behavioral health resources through community-based arts programming may contribute to improved public safety outcomes by addressing untreated mental illness and co-occurring disorders reducing the risk of harmful behaviors.
- 14) A mentally healthy health care workforce is essential to delivering high-quality, compassionate, and patient-centered care across California's behavioral health system.
- 15) Arts for health initiatives also benefit health care professionals by reducing burnout, strengthening emotional resilience, and fostering innovation in care delivery.
- 16) Integrating arts-based approaches into behavioral health and community settings can create supportive environments that reduce stress, enhance collaboration, promote well-being and brain health, and strengthen system capacity to respond to ongoing behavioral health needs.
- 17) It is appropriate to recognize the growing body of evidence demonstrating the value of arts for health initiatives in improving individual and community wellness outcomes throughout California.

FISCAL EFFECT: None. This measure is keyed nonfiscal by the Legislative Counsel.

COMMENTS:

- 1) Author's statement. According to the author, "Behavioral health challenges touch every community in California, and we need every tool available to help people heal and reconnect. The arts create space for expression, dignity, and human connection. They help veterans cope with trauma, help young people find confidence, and help communities come together in difficult times. ACR 204 recognizes the important work artists, arts organizations, and creative arts therapists do every day to support mental well-being and strengthen our communities."

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file.

Opposition

None on file.

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