

MEDICAL BOARD OF CALIFORNIA
LEGISLATIVE ANALYSIS

BILL NUMBER: SB 373
AUTHOR: Menjivar
BILL DATE: February 9, 2023, Introduced
SUBJECT: Board of Behavioral Sciences, Board of Psychology,
and Medical Board of California: Licensees' and
Registrants' Addresses
SPONSOR: CA Association of Marriage and Family Therapists
CA State Association of Psychiatrists
CA Association of Social Rehabilitation Agencies
CA Council of Comm. Behavioral Health Agencies
CA Psychological Association
CA Assn. for Licensed Prof. Clinical Counselors
National Association of Social Workers – CA Chapter
Psychiatric Physicians Alliance of California

DESCRIPTION OF CURRENT LEGISLATION

Prohibits the Medical Board of California (Board) from publicly disclosing the address of record of any licensee who practices psychiatry, except for the city, state, and zip code of their address of record. Applies similar prohibition to all licensees and registrants of the Board of Behavioral Sciences and to all licensees and registered psychological associates of the Board of Psychology.

BACKGROUND

Pursuant to [Business and Professions Code \(BPC\) section 27](#), many boards and bureaus within the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA), including the Board, must publish the address of record provided by their licensee on the internet. The Board meets this requirement through the [license lookup service](#) available through the Board's website.

The address of record provided may be a professional or personal location. In lieu of a physical address, Board licensees may provide a [P.O. Box](#)¹ for public disclosure as their address of record. Address of record information for DCA licensees is also available for download through the DCA's website and generally available pursuant to a request under the California Public Records Act.

¹ According to this United States Postal Service webpage, there are options available to rent a P.O. Box for less than \$10 per month.

The Board attempts to collect from physician licensees their areas of practice. If provided, the Board will publish that information on the physician's profile page. The Board does not verify the accuracy of this information and under its current processes is unable to determine which licensees actually practice psychiatry. Provided they practice in a competent manner consistent with the standard of care, licensees are not required to practice in an area of medicine aligned with their postgraduate training.

Further, [current law](#) requires health care service plans and insurers to publish a provider's practice address on the internet and make that available to the public.

ANALYSIS

According to the author's fact sheet:

"...mental health providers play an important role in our society and as we are experiencing a workforce shortage in this industry, we need to ensure that we are providing a safe environment for licensees to be able to conduct their work and support children and families². SB 373 seeks to lift the burden that all mental health professionals have to take in both costs and time to acquire a P.O. Box if they do not want to share their personal address."

Board Staff Comments

Publishing an address of record for licensees affords consumers the opportunity to use that information to verify the identity of the physician from whom they are seeking services and provides an address to contact the physician to communicate about their health, to obtain a copy of their medical records, or serve legal documents.

As discussed in this [JAMA Network article](#), citing US Bureau of Labor Statistics data, health care workers face higher incidents of workplace violence, compared to those in other industries. According to this [Medscape article](#), 90 percent of mental health professionals participating in a certain study reported experiencing verbal aggression or aggression with objects during their career.

Physicians, regardless of their area of practice, may use a P.O. Box to avoid having a physical address associated with them published on the Board's website.

Consideration of a Board Position

A key question for the Board to consider is whether this legislation will successfully reduce the incidence of aggression against physicians. As noted in the background section of this analysis, the physician's practice address is available to the public

² <https://calmatters.org/health/2022/09/california-shortage-mental-health-workers/>

through provider directories maintained by health care service plans and health insurance providers. Online search engines are ubiquitous and quickly offer an array of information about nearly any individual.

Psychiatrists and other mental health providers are certainly not the only healthcare professionals subject to patient or public aggression.

If the Board were to merely remove a street or P.O. Box address from the profile page of physicians who have indicated that psychiatry is one of their areas of practice, the associated costs would be relatively minor. If the Board had to develop additional processes to verify the area of practice for its physician licensees, then the cost to comply could increase significantly.

FISCAL: Unknown.

SUPPORT: None identified.

OPPOSITION: None identified.

POSITION: Recommendation: Oppose.

ATTACHMENT: [SB 373, Menjivar – Board of Behavioral Sciences, Board of Psychology, and Medical Board of California: Licensees' and Registrants' Addresses.](#)

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