The Modesto Bee

$4 MILLION PROPOSED FOR RURAL YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

SB-67 TARGETS MENTAL HEALTH GAPS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

Blanca Avila | The Modesto Bee

For young people in rural communities, getting mental-health support can mean traveling long distances or going without care because local providers are limited. A proposed $4 million state program aims to address those barriers through grants for rural organizations serving youth.

The Modesto Bee contacted Senator Marie Alvarado-Gil, author of SB-67, the Rural Youth Prevention and Early Intervention Program, ahead of the bill's November 6 Appropriations Committee hearing. In her response, Alvarado-Gil outlined how the funding would be used and how rural communities, including those in the Central Valley, could qualify.

Of the proposed $4 million, $3.6 million would fund competitive grants, while $400,000 would cover administration, technical assistance, evaluations and grant management. The funding would be spread across four fiscal years, from 2026–27 through 2029–30.



SENATOR MARIE ALVARADO-GIL

The program would not set a specific number of young people or communities expected to benefit. Alvarado-Gil said that would depend on the number of eligible applicants, local needs, and the size of each grant.

The Department of Health Care Services would also develop criteria to determine which communities qualify as rural. Those criteria would consider geographic isolation, transportation barriers, provider availability and gaps in local services.

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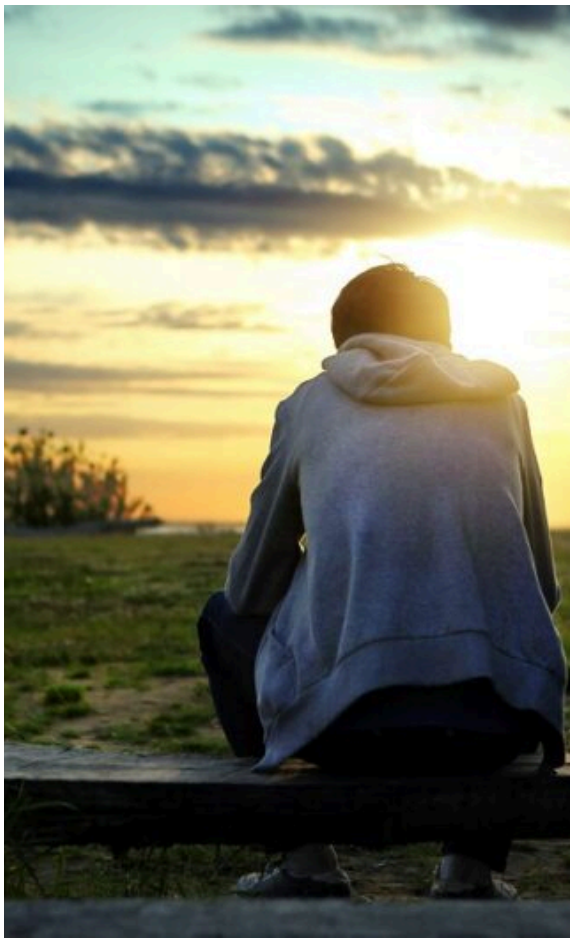
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For the Central Valley, access to funding could be especially important. Alvarado-Gil said eligible communities throughout California would be able to apply, with grant decisions based on demonstrated need. The bill does not reserve funding specifically for the Central Valley.

However, the proposed investment is not guaranteed. Alvarado-Gil said the $4 million would come from the state's General Fund but would remain subject to legislative appropriation through the budget process.

Alvarado-Gil said she hopes the Appropriations Committee will examine the bill's funding structure and implementation needs while recognizing the importance of early intervention. If SB-67 advances, it will continue through the legislative process, where lawmakers could consider additional changes.

For now, the proposal raises an important question for rural communities: whether the state will dedicate funding to help young people access mental-health support before they reach a crisis.



> "RURAL COMMUNITIES SHOULD NOT HAVE TO NAVIGATE GEOGRAPHIC ISOLATION, PROVIDER SHORTAGES, AND LIMITED RESOURCES WITHOUT MEANINGFUL SUPPORT." -SEN. ALVARADO-GIL