IN BRIEF
Requires the Department of Health Care Services to adopt the American Society of Addiction Medicine treatment criteria, or an equivalent evidence-based standard, as the minimum standard of care for licensed adult alcoholism or drug abuse recovery or treatment facilities and requires a licensee to maintain those standards with respect to the level of care to be provided by the licensee.

THE PROBLEM
Licensed treatment facilities vary in their level of service provided. Patients, families, and insurers who utilize and pay for these facilities need to know that the State has assured that they are providing fact based, evidence proven treatment in the facility. Currently there are two levels of licensure/certification provided to these facilities in California and neither require evidence-based treatment. By requiring nationally recognized evidence-based treatment criteria as a requirement of licensure like the ASAM treatment criteria, we will assure that these patients will be receiving the best care available and will not be subject to expensive anecdotal treatment options with no proven efficacy.

Southern California has become an addiction treatment destination, with more than 1100 rehab and treatment facilities in just four counties, known by some as the “Rehab Riviera.” Nearly anyone can open a treatment facility in California, and they have. The market has been flooded as insurance coverage of substance abuse treatment has expanded under state and federal laws. But as facilities expanded, standards did not. A 2017 Orange County Register investigative series laid bare the need for better oversight and uniform standards of treatment at these facilities. [Link to Register story]

According to the Register story: “From 2013 through 2016, the annual number of complaints filed against rehab centers nearly doubled, according to state regulators. During the same period, insurance companies investigated and, in some cases, sued specific centers and chains, alleging widespread billing fraud and poor care. At least three rehab centers surrendered their licenses after state regulators investigated in-patient deaths. … “But the death rate inside centers, one dying every 16 days, doesn’t include hundreds of others who died after leaving rehab centers with their addictions still raging. And many critics, including some long-time rehab operators and drug counselors, say that reflects the poor care – sometimes nonexistent care – offered in many rehab centers. They add that substandard care, which can be more profitable than thorough treatment, is part of the business model for some centers.”

ASAM CRITERIA
ASAM, founded in 1954, is a professional medical society representing over 5000 physicians, clinicians and associated professionals in the field of addiction medicine. The ASAM criteria, formerly known as the ASAM patient placement criteria, is the result of a collaboration that began in the 1980s to define one national set of criteria for providing outcome-oriented and results-based care in the treatment of addiction. Today the criteria have become the most widely used and comprehensive set of guidelines for placement, continued stay and transfer/discharge of patients with addiction and co-occurring conditions. ASAM’s criteria are required in over 30 states.

SUPPORT
SEIU
California Society of Addiction Medicine
Shatterproof
Consumer Watchdog
It’s critical that families, patients, and insurers have confidence that the treatment provided at drug rehab facilities is legitimate and based on sound research. California is home to thousands of drug and alcohol treatment facilities and it’s essential that people get treatment based upon current science, not outdated beliefs. This starts with setting standards of care based upon research. There are hundreds of millions of dollars’ worth of federal and state research not being used in treatment facilities across the country, but California lawmakers can do something to stop this travesty. Shatterproof concludes this bill will set an example for the rest of the country in how treatment facilities must follow a standard of care and encourages the adoption of these guidelines.
BACKGROUND
Licensed treatment facilities provide 24-hour non-medical care and specialize in providing services to chemically dependent adults who do not require treatment in an acute-care medical facility on an inpatient, intensive outpatient, outpatient, and partial hospitalization basis. These facilities range in size from six-bed facilities in residential neighborhoods to centers that accommodate more than 100 beds. The basic services provided by facilities include group, individual and educational sessions, alcoholism or drug abuse, recovery and treatment planning. Detoxification services are also provided and are defined as services to support and assist an individual in the alcohol and/or drug withdrawal process and to explore plans for continued treatment.