



August 10, 2015

Senate Appropriations Committee
State Capitol, Room 2206
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 1018 (Cooper) Mental Health Services Access for Children
AAP-CA Position: Support

Dear Members of the Senate Appropriations Committee:

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California, representing 5,000 board-certified pediatricians statewide, respectfully supports proposed legislation AB 1018 (Cooper). This bill would require the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) and the Department of Education to convene a joint task force to examine the delivery of mental health services to children eligible for EPSDT services and for services pursuant to the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). AB 1081 specifies that the goal of the task force is to ensure children are provided accessible and coordinated care that is compliant with state and federal law in a manner that is maximally cost-effective for the state.

In 2011, responsibility for the above services was shifted from county agencies to schools. Since then, schools have reported a lack of direction regarding how they might access or seek reimbursement from Medi-Cal and the federal government for related services under the EPSDT program. Yet it is critical that Local Education Agencies (LEAs) have access to these Medi-Cal dollars to help serve the needs of their pupils.

Pediatricians see first-hand that for children with mental health needs, including those from low-income families, early diagnosis and treatment are essential to ensuring their short and long-term well-being. Further, increasing early identification and prevention would be cost saving to the state, since by the time symptoms rise to a level where crisis or urgent care is needed the options become both more expensive and potentially of limited effectiveness.

Addressing mental health disorders in children and youth before they require emergency services and/or intervention by the criminal justice system is both (i) ethically important to protect and promote the well-being of these vulnerable children, and (ii) economically sensible for the State of California.

For the above reasons, California pediatricians urge you to vote **AYE** on AB 1018 (Cooper).

Thank you for your public service and leadership on behalf of children, youth and families in California.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'S' followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Steve Feig, MD FAAP
AAP-CA State Government Affairs Committee