



Assembly Member Jimmy Gomez, Chair
Assembly Appropriations Committee
State Capitol, Room 2114
Sacramento, CA 95814
Fax: 916.319.2181

RE: AB 1299 (Ridley-Thomas)
AAP-CA Position: Support

Dear Assembly Member Gomez,

I am writing on behalf of the American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA) representing over 5,000 California pediatricians, in strong support of AB 1299 (Ridley-Thomas) on expanding mental healthcare access for foster children.

AB 1299 (Ridley- Thomas) will help diminish barriers to mental healthcare for foster kids who receive such care outside of their home counties. Under current law, the responsibility of providing mental health services and any related funding remains with the county of origin, even after a foster youth moves to a different county. As a result, almost one in five of all youth in the state's child welfare system are left in limbo, waiting for mental health services that often take months to begin. There are significant long-term outcomes when we fail to address mental health issues in children early on such as poor academic performance, increased family stress and conflict, and poor social functioning. Mental health problems often persist into adulthood, and so it is important to address them early in childhood. By expanding access to mental health programs, pediatricians can better identify and provide services to children in the community and intervene early on to maintain their overall health.

By supporting AB 1299 (Ridley-Thomas), the state would not be spending valuable time and resources in a bureaucratic red-tape. With nearly 12,000 children hanging in the balance, AB 1299 (Ridley-Thomas) would compel the state to establish a more efficient use of funds by setting up a system reimbursement based on the child's county of residence.

Pediatricians urge your AYE vote on AB 1299 (Ridley-Thomas).

Thank you for your public service and leadership on behalf of the health and well being of children in California.

Sincerely,

Kris Calvin

Chief Executive Officer
American Academy of Pediatrics, California