



April 4, 2018

Honorable James Gallagher
State Capitol, Suite 2058
Sacramento, California 95814

RE: AB 2067 (Gallagher): School safety: armed school resource officers
AAP-CA Position: Oppose

Dear Assemblymember Gallagher:

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA), representing over 5,000 California pediatricians, respectfully opposes your proposed legislation AB 2067, which would require the placement of armed security guards or school resource officers at school sites.

We appreciate and share your concern about the safety of children at school sites, especially in the wake of recent school shootings. This is why we continue to advocate for closing loopholes in California current gun laws, as well as increasing resources for comprehensive mental health care and funding of research that treats gun violence as a public health problem. However, we do not support the placement of armed officers in public schools.

There is no evidence that armed security officers make schools any safer, and they could make them more dangerous for students. Research has found that the presence in guns in households increases, rather than decreases, the number of conflict-related injuries, as the presence of a firearm can rapidly escalate a hostile encounter. Just as the safest home for a child is one without guns, we also believe that the safest school is one without guns. As stated in AAP policy: “The absence of guns from children’s homes and communities is the most reliable and effective measure to prevent firearm-related injuries in children and adolescents.”

Furthermore, the presence of armed police officers at school sites further contributes to the criminalization of youth and children. The American Civil Liberties Union examined three school districts in the Hartford, Connecticut area that increased their school police presence and found that in all three, “very young children were being arrested, including numerous children in grade three and below” for such offenses as insubordination and leaving school grounds. In a 2007 report, “Criminalizing the Classroom,” the ACLU found that in New York City public schools assigned a police officer, the officers “often arrogate to themselves authority that extends well beyond the narrow mission of securing the safety of the students and teachers,” such as enforcing dress codes. 53% of students reported that officers yelled, swore, or otherwise talked to them in a way that made them uncomfortable; 27% reported being touched or otherwise made uncomfortable by the conduct of the officers, including many girls who were made to lift their shirts or unzip their pants to confirm they were not concealing metal objects, and students who were frisked despite not setting off metal detectors.


Given the limited resources of school districts and the state of California, we would also, respectfully, point out that this

bill continues to ignore the severe understaffing of school health teams, including school nurses and school counselors, who can provide crucial mental health services that could help prevent school shootings.

AAP policy recommends a minimum of one full-time school nurse per school site, yet as of the last school year, there were only 2,630 registered school nurses in California, compared to more than 10,000 k-12 school sites. California's students-per-counselor ratio is the worst in the nation, at nearly 1,000 to 1; 29% of school districts have no counseling programs at all, and counselors are often asked to take on duties not related to their profession when they are employed. Rather than placing police officers at school sites, we should be placing nurses and counselors, whose presence in a school has documented beneficial effects.

Pediatrician members of AAP California Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4 across the state respectfully oppose your proposed legislation and strongly urge a NO vote on AB 2067 (Gallagher). We hope to collaborate with you on future legislation on behalf of the health and wellbeing of children, youth, and families in California.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kris E. Calvin" with a long, sweeping flourish at the end.

Kris Calvin
Chief Executive Officer, American Academy of Pediatrics, California

cc: AAP-CA Leadership; Lobbyist Lydia Bourne