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September 14, 2018

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown, Jr.

Governor of the State of California

State Capitol, Suite 1173

Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 2289 (Weber): Pupil rights: pregnant and parenting pupils.

AAP-CA Position: Support

Dear Governor Brown:

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA), representing over 5,000 California pediatricians, respectfully requests your signature on proposed legislation AB 2289 (Weber), which would require school districts to extend pregnant and parenting pupils the right to parental leave and excused absences to care for their child's current or future needs.

Fewer than half of adolescent girls who have a child before the age of 18 finish high school, despite the many advantages to both mother and child in doing so. One of the reasons for this is that it is extremely difficult to remain a student in a standard high school environment while pregnant or parenting. Children, inevitably, have days when they are ill, but a student's absences to care for a sick child typically go unexcused. Further, clinic and physician offices hours often conflict with school hours, forcing a pregnant or parenting teen to choose between caring for themselves and their child, and keeping up with their own education.

California's lack of parental leave policies has a potential direct negative impact on the physical and mental health of both the parenting student and their child. Per an American Academy of Pediatrics statement, "When afforded leave after the birth of a child, "mothers breastfeed longer and parents are more likely to take children for immunizations and well-child care". Moreover, because of the developmental importance of parent-newborn bonding, "family leave can have effects that last throughout life." (AAP, 2015)

In short, lacking the right to family leave, California's teen parents are faced with a hard choice. Either they drop out of school to care for their child or stay in school while leaving the newborn with a caretaker, assuming they can afford one or find an unpaid arrangement. In worst case scenarios, an infant or child may be left inadequately cared for or even alone if the teen feels that completing school is their only option to build a life for themselves and their child long-term. In any of these scenarios, the newborn and parent face challenges and potential risks that could be avoided with a reasonable pregnant and parenting teen leave policy

AB 2289 (Weber) would ease the burden on teen parents and their children by affording pregnant students 6 to 8 weeks of leave, while also allowing a parenting student not giving birth up to 4 weeks of leave. Importantly, it would also permit parenting students up to 4 excused absences per year to care for a sick child.

Pediatrician members of AAP California Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4 across the state respectfully urge your signature on AB 2289 (Weber).

Thank you for your public service and leadership 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 underline.

Kris Calvin

Chief Executive Officer, American Academy of Pediatrics, California

cc: AAP-CA leadership; Lobbyist Lydia Bourne; Assemblymember Shirley N. Weber; Ankit Modi, MD