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September 25, 2018

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown, Jr.

Governor of the State of California

California State Capitol, Suite 1173

Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 2315 (Quirk-Silva) Public Health: Telehealth Services**

**AAP-CA Position: Support**

Dear Governor Brown:

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA), representing over 5,000 California pediatricians, respectfully urges your signature on proposed legislation AB 2315 (Quirk-Silva) to develop guidelines for the use of telehealth technology in public schools to provide mental health and behavioral health services to pupils.

One in five children in the United States has a diagnosable mental disorder and one in ten has a mental health issue severe enough to impair how they function in school and at home. According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), [suicide](#) is the second most common cause of death among U.S. [teenagers](#).

The above rates increase for children in low-income homes and those below the poverty level. Many barriers exist in getting mental health services to these children, including lack of insurance coverage, limited English proficiency, and complexity of the system. Providing mental health services in a school setting can remove those barriers. However, 29% of school districts in California have no counseling programs. In the districts that do offer counseling services, the ratio of counselor to students is 945 to one, nearly double the national average.

Telehealth is creating new ways to provide efficient, effective, and affordable pediatric health care services. In one study of a telehealth-based care model — one in an urban school and one in a rural school — telehealth technology was effective in delivering pediatric acute care to children, making it a cost-effective alternative for improving access to primary and

psychiatric health care for underserved children.<sup>1</sup> That said, telehealth is relatively new and it's important to establish guidelines for best practices to ensure that California students get the best and most appropriate care. In particular, there are currently no guidelines for the use of telehealth technology in public schools to provide mental and behavioral health to students. AB 2315 (Quirk-Silva) would require the Department of Education to work with the Department of Health Care Services to create those guidelines.

AB 2315 would be an important step forward towards making sure that our youth have access to qualified mental health professionals when they are in crisis on campus.

Pediatrician members of AAP California Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4 statewide respectfully urge your signature on AB 2315 (Quirk-Silva). 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 Quirk-Silva

<sup>1</sup> <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/112/5/1088>