



June 19, 2018

The Honorable Richard Pan
Chair, Senate Committee on Health
State Capitol, Room 2191
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 2315 (Quirk-Silva) Public Health: Telehealth Services
AAP-CA Position: Support

Dear Chair Pan,

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA), representing over 5,000 California pediatricians, strongly supports 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. Those numbers 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 care 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.¹

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. AB 2315 (Quirk-Silva) would require the Department of Education to work with the Department of Health Care Services to create those guidelines.

Pediatrician members of AAP California Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4 statewide strongly support proposed legislation AB 2315 (Quirk-Silva) and urge you to vote AYE. Thank you for your public service and leadership on behalf of the health and wellbeing of children, youth, and families in California.

Sincerely,

Kris E. Calvin

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

cc: Members of the Senate Committee on Health
Honorable Sharon Quirk-Silva, Author
AAP-CA Leadership; Lobbyist Lydia Bourne

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