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June 19, 2018

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

**RE: AB 2861 (Salas) Medi-Cal: Telehealth: Substance Use Disorder 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 2861 (Salas) to require the Department of Health Care Services to allow statewide Medi-Cal billing for substance use disorder services delivered via telehealth.

Pediatricians see firsthand the effects of substance abuse in youth, which can include significant physical and social health consequences, such as poor academic performance, poorer health status, changes in brain structure, and increased risk of death from overdose and suicide.

Substance abuse can be especially hard to combat in rural communities due to limited resources for prevention, treatment, and recovery. Telehealth has the ability to overcome the barriers of distance and time that plague rural communities and other medically underserved populations. Numerous studies have demonstrated telehealth's effectiveness in reaching those with the greatest barriers to access.

Medi-Cal offers telehealth as part of the Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System, but it does not cover all California counties. AB 2861 (Salas) would extend these services statewide so that all Californians would have access to the treatment necessary to combat this growing threat to our nation's health and well-being.

Pediatrician members of AAP California Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4 statewide strongly support proposed legislation AB 2861 (Salas) 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,

*Angela Dangou*

Angela Dangvu, M.D. Fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics  
State Government Affairs Committee, American Academy of Pediatrics, California

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