



September 22, 2016

The Honorable Jerry Brown
Governor of California
State Capitol, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 38 (Eggman) Mental health: Early Diagnosis and Preventive Treatment Program
AAP-CA Position: Support

Dear Governor Brown:

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA), representing 5,000 primary care and subspecialty pediatricians statewide, strongly supports AB 38 (Eggman). This bill would establish an Early Diagnosis and Preventive Treatment pilot program to provide early intervention, assessment, diagnosis, and treatment for individuals with severe mental illness and children with severe emotional disturbance.

In their publication *Promoting Optimal Development: Screening for Behavioral and Emotion Problems*, Drs. Carol Weitzman and Lynn Wegner state between 11 and 20% of American children have a behavioral or emotional disorder. Regrettably, only a little over one third are diagnosed by sixteen years old and only one in eight receive treatment. Most serious mental health disorders begin early in life with more than half of American adults experiencing mental health disorders exhibiting symptoms before fourteen years old. Only a fifth of children receive help for mental health or substance abuse challenges. The second leading cause of death for youth in the United States is suicide.

The American Academy of Pediatrics supports policies to address mental illness early in development and provide preventive treatment whenever possible. Further, AAP encourages pediatricians to prepare for and plan screenings in their offices, as well as collaboration between pediatric offices and community mental health providers when a child or parent has a positive screening result. AAP also recommends that children with significant risk factors, such as a family history of psychosocial problems and substance abuse, be screened more frequently.

This bill represents an innovative response to California's mental health crisis and, in particular, to concerns regarding the provision of mental health care to the remaining two-thirds of youth in the U.S. who are undiagnosed and 88% who are untreated. Pediatricians, therefore, respectfully urge you to sign AB 38 and thank you for your public service and leadership on behalf of the health and well-being of children, youth, and families in California.

Sincerely,

Kris E. Calvin



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