



February 10, 2015

California State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

AAP-CA Position on AB 47: Support

Dear Assemblymember McCarty,

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California, representing the 5,000 board-certified pediatrician members of all four California AAP regional chapters statewide (Ch 1 – Northern California, Ch 2 – Greater Los Angeles, Ch 3 – San Diego, and Ch 4 – Orange County), strongly supports proposed legislation AB 47 (McCarty). This bill would require the Department of Education to report to the Legislature and Department of Finance, by June 1, 2016, a plan for expanding the state preschool program to all eligible low-income children who do not have access to one year of state preschool or transitional kindergarten. The bill would require the report to contain an analysis of the need for new facilities for the state preschool program in order to provide access to all eligible children.

Currently, approximately 95% of children in California attend kindergarten. Studies have shown that the 5% who do not attend may be missing early socialization, stimulation, and school readiness activities, as well as early identification of areas for intervention and/or support. In addition, kindergarten provides a safe place for children to engage in productive activities. This is especially crucial in low-income or high-risk communities. Recent research shows that by the age of two, low-income children are six months behind in language development relative to their higher income peers. By age five, low-income children are more than two years behind in language development. Research shows that California children with the largest gaps in school readiness and achievement are the least likely to participate in any preschool and the least likely to attend high-quality programs. Only one-half of California low-income preschoolers receive state preschool or federal Head Start services, and only one-quarter of all children attend transitional kindergarten. Children who are not reading proficiently by the end of 3rd grade are four times more likely to not graduate from high school on time. Only 48 percent of California 3rd graders test proficient or better in English-language arts. More than 100 studies nationally have shown that high-quality preschool significantly improves children's school readiness and school performance. Numerous longitudinal studies show that high-quality preschool decreases grade retention and special education placements, and increases high school graduation rates, college enrollment, and earnings as adults as well as decreases costs in criminal justice and welfare activities.

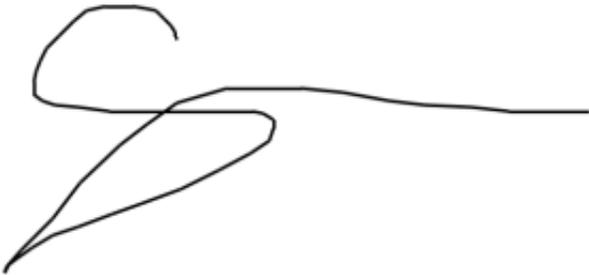
Pediatricians support AB 47 because our job is to assure that a child has adequate health care and children can only assume responsibility for their health if they have the mental capacity to understand and do so. Our duty is to assure that mental stability is addressed and that child development includes learning and education assessments and aid in intervention if necessary.

We thank you for your public service and leadership on behalf of children across California

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'MB', enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

Mercedes Bell, MD
Senior AAP Policy Analyst
American Academy of Pediatrics, California District

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'SM', with a large loop and a long horizontal tail.

Sarah Morgan
Policy Analyst
American Academy of Pediatrics, California District