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September 16, 2015

Governor Jerry Brown  
State Capitol, Suite 1173  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 827 (O'Donnell) LGBTQ School Resources**  
**AAP-CA Position: SUPPORT**

Dear Governor Brown:

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California, representing over 5,000 board-certified California primary care and subspecialty pediatricians statewide, strongly supports proposed legislation AB 827 (O'Donnell), as amended on August 25, 2015. This bill would require the California Department of Education (CDE), as a part of its compliance monitoring, to assess whether local educational agencies have provided information on existing school-site and community resources related to the support of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) students.

Every child deserves free and easy access to the best education possible. Included in this is a strong support system to allow children to be present and involved in their education, and encourage them to complete high school. Yet many studies show that as a result of discriminatory treatment, LGBTQ youth are at higher risk for harassment and school-based bullying. As a result, it is estimated that almost 1/3 of LGBT youth drop out of high school, which is more than three times the national rate.

LGBTQ youth are often exposed to circumstances, including lack of support systems, which can result in preventable mental health issues, if not addressed. One important factor in promoting their resiliency is completion of high school, as lower education levels have been linked with poor health, more stress and lower self-confidence.

As stated by the National AAP, "Although most lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth are quite resilient and emerge from adolescence as healthy adults, the effects of homophobia and heterosexism can contribute to health disparities in mental health with higher rates of depression and suicidal ideation, higher rates of substance abuse, and more sexually transmitted and HIV infections." (2013)

As pediatricians, we advocate for the both the physical and mental well being of our adolescent patients. Requiring schools to ensure easy access support systems would help mediate some of these barriers to education and health.

AAP-CA respectfully urges you to sign AB 827 (O'Donnell). We thank you for your public service and leadership on behalf of children, youth and families in California.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'Z' followed by a series of connected loops and a long horizontal tail.

Zephyr Dworsky, MD  
Senior Policy Analyst, AAP-CA

A handwritten signature in black ink, featuring a large, sweeping initial 'A' followed by a long, slightly upward-sloping horizontal line.

Ashley Martinez, MD  
Senior Policy Analyst, AAP-CA