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September 26, 2017

Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr.  
California State Capitol, Suite 1173  
Sacramento, CA 95814

SB 442 (Newman): Pool Drownings  
AAP-CA Position: SUPPORT

Dear Governor Brown:

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA), representing over 5,000 California pediatricians, strongly supports proposed legislation SB 442 (Newman). SB 442 would update and strengthen California's Swimming Pool Safety Act in order to better safeguard the lives and safety of California children.

Despite existing regulation, residential swimming pools continue to be the leading cause of death for California children ages 1-4. Furthermore, "near-drowning" victims, who survive a drowning situation but often suffer lifelong disability and brain damage as a consequence, make up the largest group of people provided treatment through the California Department of Developmental Services. This represents not only a financial burden on the state, but—far more importantly—lifetimes of suffering imposed on children and their families.

Even an extremely conscientious parent may not be aware that their toddler has gone missing and is at the bottom of the pool before it is too late. "Drowning can be quick and quiet when it occurs. In real life, there is very little splashing, waving or screaming. When a child begins to struggle in the water, something called the instinctive drowning response kicks in. 12 Older children cannot wave their arms because they instinctively extend their arms to the side and press down on the water to try and lift their bodies up so their mouth is above the water line. Younger children do not even have the strength to do this so will remain with their face in the water with little to no movement in their arms and legs. Nor can children yell – they are struggling to keep their mouths above water and only have time to grab a quick breath before the cycle repeats and eventually they tire out, cannot fight to stay above water and become submerged. 12-13 Drowning takes only minutes and once the instinctive drowning response begins it can be less than 20 seconds before a child sinks below the surface. 3 Brain damage can occur within five minutes of being submerged under water, and with each minute a child is submerged, the severity of outcome worsens." ( Keeping Kids Safe In and Around Water , Safe Kids Worldwide, July 2017)

SB 442 (Newman) would help to prevent the tragic consequences of drownings and near drownings for children by taking simple, common-sense steps to strengthen the Swimming Pool Safety Act: ensuring that every new pool constructed be equipped with two, rather than just one, of seven specified safety measures; that in every house listed for sale with a pool or spa, a noninvasive physical inspection be carried out to determine which of these safety features is present; and that these standards be applied uniformly across the state.

California pediatricians respectfully request that you sign SB 442 (Newman ) into law. We thank you for your public service and leadership on behalf of the health and wellbeing of children, youth, and families in California.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kris E. Calvin" with a decorative flourish at the end.

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

CC: AAP-CA Leadership, Lydia Bourne, AAP-CA Advocate