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March 7, 2018

The Honorable Benjamin Allen.  
Chair, Senate Education Committee  
State Capitol, Room 2083  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
Fax: (916) 445-7799

**RE: SB 940 (Beall): Student financial aid: Cal Grant Program: foster youth  
AAP-CA Position: Support**

Dear Senator Allen,

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA), representing over 5,000 California pediatricians, supports SB 940 (Beall). This bill would provide alternative deadlines for submitting a complete financial aid application for a student who is a current or former foster youth, who is attending a qualifying institution that offers baccalaureate degrees or is attending a California community college, and has not yet reached 26 years of age as of July 1 of the award year.

Foster children are among the most vulnerable populations in our state: many are survivors of multiple traumas and have had little or no family support from a young age. It is no surprise, then, that making the leap to college is a tough ask for most foster kids. According to the National Factsheet on the Educational Outcomes of Children in Foster Care, 84% of 17- and 18-year-old foster children state a desire to go to college—yet only 50% even graduate from high school. Moreover, only 20% attend college and fewer than 10% attain a bachelor's degree. There are many reasons for this, but chief among them is an inability to afford a college degree. We hear from our pediatrician members that their foster youth patients often tell them they would like to go to college, but they simply don't have the money. Yet a college education promises foster kids an average of \$481,000 in additional lifetime earnings—a potential ticket out of poverty, if only they could afford it.

Of the nearly 25,000 children who “age out” of foster care yearly, less than 3% will earn a college degree, 1 in 5 will become homeless after age 18 and only half will be employed at age 24. SB 940 would allow California's foster youth to continue to benefit from policy that gives them better access to California's public colleges and universities. Additionally, according to Reframing School Dropout As a Public Health Issue, education is one of the strongest predictors of health. Higher levels of education are correlated with better health and longer lives. (2007).

The National AAP guidelines for foster care youth recommend a comprehensive plan as adolescents age out of foster care that includes the acquisition of skills crucial for future independence, such as completing their education, to aid in the healthy transition into adulthood (2015). Foster children are at high risks of poor health, unstable lifestyles, and lower income. As pediatricians, we believe that with increased access to college, foster children have the potential to lead more successful healthy lives.

SB 940 (Beall) would help foster youth achieve their dreams by making it easier for them to access the financial aid resources essential to a college education—and, in turn, a life not limited by their difficult beginnings.

Pediatricians across the state urge you to vote AYE on SB 940 (Beall). 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 long, sweeping horizontal line at the end.

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

cc: Senate Education Committee Members  
Office of Honorable Jim Beall, California State Senate (Author)  
Lydia Bourne, AAP-CA Lobbyist