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April 9, 2018

Honorable Benjamin Allen  
Chair, Senate Education Committee  
State Capitol, Room 2083  
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 967 (Berryhill): Public postsecondary education: waiver of mandatory systemwide tuition and fees: current or former foster youth  
AAP-CA Position: Support

Dear Chair Allen:

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA), representing over 5,000 California pediatricians, supports proposed legislation SB 967 (Berryhill), which would prohibit public postsecondary campuses from charging mandatory systemwide tuition or fees to current or former foster youth, who meet certain requirements, for a total of the equivalent of attendance in a 4-year undergraduate program.

Foster youth face some of the most challenging circumstances of all California children. Often removed from their families due to abuse, neglect, or other traumatic experiences, they are shuffled between homes and often removed or isolated from their support networks due to multiple moves. 70% of foster children experience more than three foster placements during their time in the system; at the same time, less than half complete high school or earn a GED, and not even three percent earn a bachelor's degree, according to the Education Commission of the States. One of the many barriers facing foster youth who wish to earn a postsecondary degree is the high cost of a university education; unlike many of their peers, foster youth cannot rely on family support in attaining their degree, and are often unaware of alternate options for financing their education.

SB 967 (Berryhill) would help foster youth access postsecondary education by making public colleges and universities tuition- and fee-free for those who have been in foster care for at least 12 months, thus removing one barrier to foster youth achievement and investing in the future of these children.

Pediatrician members of AAP California Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4 across the state strongly support proposed legislation SB 967 (Berryhill). 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, consisting of several overlapping, fluid strokes that form a cursive name.

Melissa Ruiz, M.D., Fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics  
Executive Board Member, American Academy of Pediatrics, California

cc: Honorable Tom Berryhill, author  
Members of the Senate Education Committee  
AAP-CA Leadership; Lobbyist Lydia Bourne