



May 24, 2018

Senator Richard Pan
State Capitol, Room 4070
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 968 (Pan): Postsecondary Education: Mental Health Counselors
AAP-CA Position: Support

Dear Senator Pan,

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA), representing over 5,000 California pediatricians statewide, supports your proposed legislation SB 968 to require the California State University (CSU), Board of Trustees, Board of Governors (BOG) of the California Community College (CCC) and request the Regents of University of California (UC) to have one full-time equivalent mental health counselor per 1,500 students enrolled at each of their respective campuses.

It has been reported that nearly 73% of students experience some sort of mental health crisis during college, and the demand for mental health services has grown at five times the rate as average student enrolment. Some students arrive with pre-existing or newly diagnosed conditions; approximately 50 percent of psychiatric disorders begin by age 14 and over 75 percent arise by age 25. Others experience anxiety, depression, homesickness, and issues brought on by the intensity of the college experience. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among college students claiming more than 1,100 lives every year nationally. These issues may be more acute for students of color.

There are many barriers to seeking help: stigmatization of mental health disorders, financial hardships, and immigration status. School-based mental health services can address these concerns by removing barriers to accessing services and providing prevention efforts as well as intervention strategies, but only if sufficient services are provided. SB 968 seeks to ensure provision of mental health services for students by requiring each campus to meet the standard of one counselor to every 1,500 students and by establishing a systemwide reporting requirement to assess mental health on campus.

Pediatrician members of AAP California Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4 statewide strongly support proposed legislation SB 968. Thank you for your public service and leadership on behalf of the health and wellbeing of children, youth, and families in California.

Sincerely,

Kris E. Calvin

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

cc: AAP-CA Leadership; Lobbyist Lydia Bourne