

April 16, 2019

Senator Richard Pan, MD  
Chair, Committee on Health  
State Capitol, Room 2191  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 11 (Beall): Health care coverage: mental health parity**  
**AAP-CA Position: Support**

Dear Senator Pan:

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA) representing the over 5,000 board-certified pediatrician members of California AAP Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4 statewide, strongly supports proposed legislation SB 11 (Beall) to strengthen enforcement of state and federal mental health parity laws. SB 11 would also streamline access to FDA-approved prescription drug benefits for the treatment of substance use disorders.

“A growing number of youth in California experience mental illnesses and substance use disorders (SUDs). The incidence of major depressive episodes in adolescents has increased over the last five years, as has the national rate of alcohol and drug use. Unfortunately, access to mental health and SUD treatment falls far short: A majority of youth do not receive treatment.” (*Mental Health and Substance Use: A Crisis for California’s Youth*, California Healthcare Foundation 2018)

One approach to increase access to mental health services has been the passage of mental health parity laws. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) approaches mental health as a component of overall health, and has thus voiced long-standing support for such laws to establish mental health parity in services and access. However, parity laws have not always been well-enforced, leaving many, including children, vulnerable to a lack of needed mental health treatment. By requiring health care service plans and health insurers to document their compliance with parity laws, SB 11 would help to support better enforcement of these laws and to improve mental health access for Californians to mental health services.

With respect to substance use disorders, appropriately prescribed and monitored prescription are often a component of medically necessary treatments. Delays and barriers to access those drugs can impede recovery when timeliness is imperative. SB 11 would also address this access issue, by ensuring that all such drugs, if FDA approved, would not face extra hurdles in the prescription process.

Pediatricians across the state of California urge an AYE vote on SB 11 (Beall). Thank you for your public service and leadership on behalf of the health and well-being of the children, youth, and families of California.

Sincerely,



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