

April 17, 2019

Senator Jim Beall
State Capitol, Room 2082
Sacramento, CA 95814

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

Dear Senator Beall:

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 your proposed legislation SB 11 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.

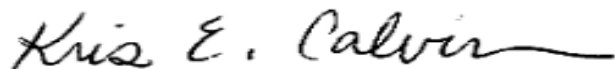
“A growing number of youth in California experience mental illnesses and substance use disorders (SUDs). The incidence of major depressive episodes in adolescents has increased over the last five years, as has the national rate of alcohol and drug use. Unfortunately, access to mental health and SUD treatment 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 prescriptions 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 strongly support your proposed legislation SB 11. 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