

March 6, 2019

Assembly Member Patrick O'Donnell, Chair
Education Committee
Legislative Office Building, 1020 N Street, Room 159
Sacramento, CA 94249

**RE: AB 396 (Eggman) School employees: School Social
Worker Pilot Program. AAP-CA Position: Support**

Dear Assembly Member O'Donnell:

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 AB 396 (Eggman) placing social workers in K-8 schools in districts within five counties that have high proportions of vulnerable or disadvantaged students.

Many of California's most vulnerable students are severely lacking in access to in-school support services. In recent years, California's students-per-counselor ratio has been the worst in the nation, at nearly 1,000 to 1, and nearly 1 in 3 school districts have no counseling programs at all. When counselors are present at school sites, they are often so burdened with administrative duties that they have little to no time to counsel individual students. Placing social workers at school sites can help improve students' access to counseling services, as social workers are trained to provide behavioral health care, conflict mediation, and screening for abuse, neglect, and other dangerous situations; however, social workers are not routinely placed at most school sites.

AB 396 would pilot a five-county program to place social workers in schools with high populations of at-risk students. This stands to improve the health, safety and well-being of schoolchildren, while also contributing to improved long-term outcomes for individual students and the community as a whole, including reduced detention and suspension rates, improved access to support services, and higher test scores and graduation rates. The results of this pilot program could also inform efforts to expand support services to students across the state.

Pediatricians across the state of California strongly support AB 396 and urge you to vote AYE. 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
cc: AAP-CA Leadership; AAPCA Advocate Lydia Bourne