

April 23, 2019

Assemblymember Miguel Santiago
Chair, Committee on Communications and Conveyance
State Capitol, Room 6027
Sacramento, California 95814

RE: AB 1168 (Mullin): Emergency services: text to 911
AAP-CA Position: Support

Dear Assemblymember Santiago:

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 1168 (Mullin) requiring the deployment of 911 texting services by 2021.

There are many emergency situations where placing a phone call might endanger the safety of the caller. During a home invasion, for instance, someone hiding in a closet or under a bed would not be able to place a call for fear of alerting the invader to their presence. A bystander to domestic violence—or a victim, hiding in a locked room—may not be able to place a call that would anger the abuser. One of our pediatrician members described to us a patient of hers that did not call 911 when her mother was being abused in their apartment because she was too afraid of drawing attention to herself; unfortunately, this is an all-too-common scenario.

Even in less immediately dangerous circumstances, however, teens and children are often more comfortable texting than placing a call, especially when relaying emotionally fraught information. Many crisis support and suicide prevention lines for teens now offer confidential texting services. Moreover, younger Californians may assume that 911 accepts texts, possibly delaying emergency responses if their local responders are not set up to do so.

AB 1168 (Mullin) would improve the safety of all Californians by requiring that 911 lines develop and deploy systems for accepting text messages by 2021, making it easier and safer to report dangerous situations as they develop, especially for children and youth.

Pediatricians across the state of California urge an AYE vote on AB 1168 (Mullin).

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: The Honorable Kevin Mullin; AAP-CA Leadership; AAPCA Advocate Lydia Bourne