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August 19, 2020

Assemblymember Robert Rivas
State Capitol, Room 5158
Sacramento, CA 94249-0039

RE: AB 2164 (RIVAS): Telehealth
AAP-CA Position: SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Rivas,

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA) representing the over 5,000 pediatrician members of California AAP Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4 statewide strongly supports your proposed legislation AB 2164 as amended on July 22, 2020, prohibiting requiring face-to-face contact between a health care provider and a Medi-Cal eligible patient for a federally qualified health center (FQHC) or rural health clinic (RHC) to establish a patient or to render and bill for services.

Many California families have difficulties with access to care, especially low-income families and those in rural areas. Having to travel long distances or by public transport if they don't own transportation, miss a day of work, and wait in a physician's office is difficult at the best of times and has been made even more so by the COVID-19 pandemic. The populations served by FQHCs and RHCs are especially vulnerable to gaps in care when referrals to specialists require additional appointments, time off work, travel, or other challenges for Medicaid or underinsured patients.

One in six Californians is dependent on a FQHC for their healthcare needs and one in three is covered by Medi-Cal. AB 2164 would improve access to health care for low-income children, children living in rural areas, and other Californians by ensuring that community health centers can deliver care to both new and established patients using telehealth and would additionally expand network capabilities by increasing access to specialty care through telehealth.

Pediatricians across the state strongly support AB 2164. Thank you for your public service and leadership on behalf of the health and wellbeing of children, youth, and families in California.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kris E. Calvin". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Kris Calvin, CEO
American Academy of Pediatrics, California

Cc: AAP Leadership; Senior Policy Analyst Isaac Sergei Horowitz, DO