

April 16, 2019

Assemblymember Patrick O'Donnell  
Chair, Assembly Committee on Education  
Capitol Office, Room 4001  
Sacramento, California 94249-0070

**RE: AB-123 ( McCarty) Early childhood education: state preschool program**  
**AAP-CA Position: SUPPORT**

Dear Assemblymember O'Donnell,

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA) representing over 5,000 board-certified pediatrician members of California AAP Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4, strongly supports AB 123 (McCarty) expanding access to full-day, full-year preschool, raising preschool quality and increasing teacher salaries and qualifications to help close the school readiness gap.

Research shows that high-quality preschool improves a child's school readiness and social-emotional development and builds a foundation for future success. The benefits of high-quality preschool are especially powerful for socioeconomically disadvantaged children who often enter kindergarten behind their peers and struggle to catch up. California has made progress in expanding access to preschool through State Preschool, Transitional Kindergarten and Head Start. However, 30% of low-income 4-year-olds and 66% of low-income 3-year-olds still lack access to licensed preschool.

AB 123 (McCarty) expands access to full-day, full-year preschool for all 4-year-olds who live in a neighborhood where more than 70% of students are eligible for free or reduced-priced meals and ensures that all 3-year-olds in poverty receive two years of high-quality preschool. It would increase preschool teachers' salaries and provide scholarships for teachers to pursue higher education in early learning fields.

In addition, the bill would require preschool head teachers to have a Bachelors of Arts degree. Currently, California State Preschool teachers are only required to have 24 units in Early Childhood Education or child development coursework plus 16 General Education units. Studies have shown that BA-level teachers provide a range of benefits to students, including richer language environments, less punitive teaching styles and overall improved student-teacher interactions. AB 123 (McCarty) would also cap the teacher-student ratio low in pre-K programs at 24 students, ensuring each pupil receives the attention and care they need. AB 123 (McCarty) will help California to provide high-quality, full-day, full-year preschool to children and to meet the needs of working families. *We respectfully urge your AYE vote.*

Thank you for your public service and leadership on behalf of the health and wellbeing of the children, youth, and families of California.

Sincerely,



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

cc: The Honorable Kevin McCarty (author); AAP-CA Leadership; AAPCA Advocate Lydia Bourne