
March 9, 2020

The Honorable Lorena Gonzalez
State Capitol,
P.O. Box 942849-0080
Sacramento, CA 95814-4900

RE: AB 1913 (GONZALEZ): Voter Education: High School Pupils.
AAP-CA Position: Support

Dear Assembly Member Gonzalez

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 1913 as amended on January 9, 2020. This bill would designate January and September as “high school voter education months,” would provide 12th grade students with education about voting, and give them the opportunity to register or pre-register on campus.

A recent opinion piece on youth voting by two California pediatrician leaders, Stephanie Fong Gomez, MD, MS and Anna Kaplan, MD, cites extensive data on the positive correlation between youth voting and lifelong health and well-being. “Among nationally-representative samples, voting predicted increased personal and household incomes and higher levels of education — all-powerful social determinants of health in our society. Teens who voted were more likely to subsequently engage in healthy behaviors like exercising and abstaining from heavy drinking and smoking. They also experienced less depressive symptoms. Another study showed that among a low-income, urban sample, civic engagement was linked to decreased criminal activity and increased optimism and life satisfaction.” (https://opmed.doximity.com/articles/3-reasons-why-pediatricians-should-help-teens-rock-the-vote?_csrf_attempted=yes)

Youth turnout in the 2018 election increased more than any other group, yet the group still lags behind other age groups in registration and participation. One barrier to participation is that voting and registering to vote can be complicated. One study by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) found that missing registration deadlines and not knowing where or how to register were the top two reasons given by people between the ages of 18 and 29 for why they did not register. According to a study published in the Cambridge University Press, classroom presentations on voter registration on college campuses, increased registration rates by 6%.

Existing law requires the last 2 full weeks in April and in September to be known as “high school voter

education weeks.” AB 1913 expands this, making January and September “high school voter education months” and requiring that schools allow students to register or pre-register to vote on campus during school hours.

The challenges the nation faces today will impact our youth disproportionately. Youth will need civic knowledge and skills more than ever in order to function successfully as adults. Because we support civic engagement from citizens of all ages and parties, pediatricians across the state of California strongly support AB 1913. Thank you for your public service and leadership on behalf of the health and well-being of the children, youth, and families of California.



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

cc: AAP-CA Leadership