

January 7, 2020

Senator Connie Leyva
Chair, Committee on Education
State Capitol, Room 2083
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 673 (Morrell): Comprehensive sexual health education and prevention education.
AAP-CA Position: OPPOSE**

Dear Senator Leyva:

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, respectfully opposes SB 673 (Morrell) as amended on April 1, 2019, which would require parents to “opt-in” for HIV and sex education before grade 7, as well as imposing additional requirements relating to the inspection of instructional materials.

The American Academy of Pediatrics supports comprehensive, evidence-based sexuality education in public schools, due to its crucial role in ensuring the health and well-being of adolescents. As noted in the AAP policy statement “Sexuality Education for Children and Adolescents,” “If comprehensive sexuality education programs are offered in the schools positive outcomes can occur, including delay in the initiation and reduction in the frequency of sexual intercourse, a reduction in the number of sexual partners, and an increase in condom use. Some studies also have shown less truancy and an improvement in academic performance in those who have taken sexuality education courses.”

The California Healthy Youth Act allows age appropriate and medically accurate health education to be given before 7th grade. The Act currently allows the option for parents to opt out of this instruction for their children, if desired. In contrast, SB 673 would establish a new requirement that parents actively opt-in to this education. If a student forgets to obtain consent or misplaces a consent form, they would no longer be able to receive the education, even if their parent wanted them to be taught the material. Research demonstrates that an opt-out procedure more accurately reflects parents’ wishes and ensures students are not accidentally withheld from class; whereas, an opt-in procedure creates an unnecessary barrier that can unintentionally deny students access to sex ed. SB 673 (Morrell) would also impose additional requirements for inspection of instructional materials. These requirements are unnecessary. Current law provides for robust notice and parental access to these materials prior to the commencement of instruction.

An alarming number of youth are still affected by sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in the United States. According to the CDC, half of the 20 million STIs reported each year in the U.S. are among young people ages 15-24. Moreover, teens and young adults ages 13-24 account for 21% of all new U.S. HIV diagnoses.

SB 673 would create a barrier to students’ education in an area that clearly requires more instruction and not less.

Pediatricians across California respectfully urge a NO vote on SB 673 (Morrell). 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 Mike Morrell; AAP-CA Leadership