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April 20, 2020

The Honorable Jim Beall  
State Capitol, Room 2082  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 854 (BEALL) Health Care Coverage: Substance Use Disorders**

**AAP-CA Position: Support**

Dear Senator Beall,

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 SB 854 as introduced on January 14, 2020. This bill prohibits a mental health plan or insurer from imposing prior authorization requirements or step therapy requirements before authorizing coverage for FDA-approved prescriptions for medication-assisted treatment (MAT) of substance use disorders (SUDs) and would place the FDA- approved medications for treatment of substance use disorders on the lowest cost-sharing tier.

Substance abuse among teenagers is rising and not all who need it receive treatment. According to a 2015-2016 study from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 4% of teens in California misused pain relievers, 38% used marijuana, 13% participated in binge type drinking, 17% vaped, and 5% smoked cigarettes in the month prior to the survey.

The California Health Care Foundation found that fewer than 10% of youth who need substance use disorder services receive them with lack of easy access being listed as the first reason. The California Society of Addiction Medicine (CSAM) survey found 56% percent of respondents had difficulty accessing medication-assisted treatment for patients new to treatment, and 46 % had difficulty getting approval for maintenance treatment due to insurance barriers.

Substance use disorders are an urgent issue in pediatric medicine. Some patients who have been prescribed opioids to deal with pain become addicted. Barriers to providing medication-assisted treatment such as requiring prior authorization prolong those substance use disorders. SB 854 would decrease barriers and help Californians who need and want treatment to receive it in the face of the rising tide of substance abuse disorders.

Pediatricians across the state of California strongly support SB 854. 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Samantha Fitter".

Samantha Fitter, MD  
Member, American Academy of Pediatrics, California

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*The American Academy of Pediatrics, California is the state-level advocacy organization of the four AAP California Chapters. Our mission is to promote the health and well-being of all children and youth in California and to support the professional needs of our California Chapter member pediatricians.*

*We are a 501(c)4 nonprofit legally incorporated in California.*