

March 25, 2019

Senator Richard Pan, Chair  
Committee on Health  
State Capitol, Room 2191  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 539 (Caballero): Mental Health Services Act: workforce education and training funds.  
AAP-CA Position: Support**

Dear Senator Pan:

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, strongly supports proposed legislation SB 539 (Caballero) creating the Workforce Education and Training (WET) Trust Fund.

While need for mental health services remains strong in California, our state's mental health care sector faces continuing challenges, including a shortage of qualified workers, a lack of appropriate training programs, and limited continuing education. This negatively affects children in need of mental health care, especially children from disadvantaged backgrounds: while an estimated 1 in 10 California children in low-income families suffers from severe emotional disturbance, according to the California Health Care Foundation, fewer than 3% of children enrolled in Medi-Cal received specialty mental health services in 2017. While there are many reasons for this access gap, lack of qualified providers surely contributes.

The Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development (OSHPD) is statutorily mandated to develop a WET plan every five years to guide the state's effort to grow the mental health workforce. However, there is currently no funding dedicated to implementing this statutorily-required Five-Year Plan.

SB 539 (Caballero) would establish the ongoing funding needed to implement the 2020-2025 WET Five-Year Plan to address California's mental health workforce needs. Additionally, it will help fund future plans so that California can continue to expand and strengthen our mental health workforce until there is no longer a shortage.

Pediatricians across the state of California urge an AYE vote on SB 539 (Caballero). 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 Ana Caballero; AAP-CA Leadership