



American Academy of Pediatrics, California
5000 Campus Drive Newport Beach, CA 92660

Phone (626) 796-1632 | **Fax**
(626) 628-3382

Email: support@aap-ca.org | www.AAP-CA.org

March 8, 2021

The Honorable Anthony Portantino
State Capitol Room 5050
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 14 (Portantino) Mental Health: Training and Excused Absence
AAP-CA Position: SUPPORT

Dear Senator Portantino,

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA) representing over 3,000 pediatrician members strongly supports SB 14, as introduced on December 7, 2020, which would require training for educational employees on mental health issues and permit 10-12th grade students to receive training on the signs and symptoms of a behavioral health disorder. It would also ensure that youth absences from school for a mental health issue or appointment will be an excused absence in the same fashion absences for physical health ailments or appointments are treated.

The Centers for Disease Control estimates that approximately 4.5 million children between the ages of 3 and 17 have been diagnosed with a mental or behavioral health challenge. One in six high school students report having considered suicide in the past year and one in three LGBTQ students have had suicidal thoughts. Suicide is now the second leading cause of death for teenagers in the US after accidents. The COVID-19 crisis has only exacerbated mental health problems for youth.

Under existing law, the California Department of Education (DOE) is not required to identify an evidence-based mental health training program for local educational agencies to use to train teachers and other school personnel who have direct, daily contact with pupils. Furthermore, although physical health challenges merit excused absences, mental and behavioral health challenges are not considered sufficient grounds to excuse absences for K-12 pupils.

SB 14 would require the DOE to identify an evidence-based training program for a local educational agency to use to train classified and certificated school employees having direct contact with pupils in youth mental and behavioral health. The bill will also permit 10-12th grade students to receive training on the signs and symptoms of a behavioral health disorder. It will ensure that youth absences from school for a mental health issue or appointment will be an excused absence in the same fashion absences for physical health ailments or appointments are treated. AAP-CA strongly supports SB 14. Thank you for your public service and leadership on behalf of the health and wellbeing of children, youth, and families in California.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jacques Corriveau". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Jacques Corriveau, M.D. FAAP
Chair, State Government Affairs Committee
American Academy of Pediatrics, California
cc: AAP Leadership