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April 1, 2021

The Honorable Buffy Wicks  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 1117 (Wicks) The Healthy Start: Toxic Stress and Trauma Resiliency for Children Program**  
**AAP-CA Position: SUPPORT**

Dear Assemblymember Wicks,

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA) representing over 3,000 pediatrician members strongly supports AB 1117, as introduced on February 18, 2021, which would establish the Healthy Start: Toxic Stress & Trauma Resiliency for Children Program.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) have been shown to lead to increased risk of a number of physical and emotional issues from failure to thrive and growth delay to increased engagement in high-risk behaviors and substance abuse. In California, 1 in 3 children and nearly 2 in 3 adults have experienced at least one Adverse Childhood Experience. The situation, however, is not hopeless. By identifying the signs of ACEs and intervening early, the impact of ACEs can be lessened.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, California's children were already facing serious physical, emotional, and intellectual barriers to meeting their academic potential and realizing improved physical and mental health. California's children's needs have been further compounded by school closures and social isolation during the pandemic which have affected all students, but particularly those living in poverty. According to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, schools are an important mental health system for many children and adolescents, providing mental health services to 57% of adolescents who need care. Children from lower-income families are disproportionately more likely to receive mental health services exclusively from school.

AB 1117 will establish the Healthy Start: Toxic Stress & Trauma Resiliency for Children Program that would fund innovative local collaboratives between schools, communities, county and city agencies, nonprofit service providers, and early childhood serving programs and agencies. This bill will target school districts serving students who have historically been marginalized due to poverty, isolation, juvenile justice or child welfare involvement, low access to healthcare services, immigration status, or other social determinants that impact their health.

AB 1117 will help provide early identification of ACEs so that treatment can begin quickly and be as effective as possible. AAP-CA strongly supports AB 1117. Thank you for your public service and leadership on behalf of the health and wellbeing of children, youth, and families in California.

Sincerely,



Melissa Ruiz, MD FAAP  
Member, State Government Affairs Committee  
American Academy of Pediatrics, California

cc: AAP Leadership