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February 25, 2021

The Honorable James Ramos
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0040

RE: AB-270 (Ramos) Core Behavioral Health Crisis Services System
AAP-CA Position: SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Ramos,

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA) representing over 3,000 pediatrician members strongly supports AB 270, as introduced on January 19, 2021, which would create the Core Behavioral Health Crisis Services System, using the digits '988' for the 988 Suicide Prevention and Behavioral Health Crisis Hotline.

People have become accustomed to using 911 if there's a crisis of any type, but the police and emergency personnel are not always the best choice when it comes to resolving mental health crises. According to a study by the Treatment Advocacy Center, the risk of being killed by law enforcement is 16 times higher for individuals with untreated serious mental illness than for other civilians.¹

In 2019, '988' became the number for the suicide hotline under Federal law. AB 270 would implement the 988 Suicide Prevention and Behavioral Health Crisis Hotline throughout our state, in accordance with the federal system. It would require local jurisdictions to create Mobile Crisis Teams to provide onsite response services to crisis calls made through the hotline. Funding would come from a surcharge on wireless bills in the same manner that 911 services are funded.

Mental health disorders and suicide attempts pose major risks for youth. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Committee on Adolescence reports that suicide is the second leading cause of death for adolescents 15 to 19 years old, affecting young people from all races and socioeconomic groups. By establishing a state-wide hotline, youth (and adults) would have access to mental health services quickly. Additionally, the existence of mobile crisis teams means that in-person services could be provided to people experiencing a crisis, thus providing quick and appropriate care as well as making crisis situations safer for both civilians and law enforcement.

AAP-CA strongly supports AB 270. 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 that reads "Angela Dangvu M.D." with a stylized flourish at the end.

Angela Dangvu, M.D. FAAP

Member, State Government Affairs Committee
American Academy of Pediatrics, California

cc: AAP Leadership

¹ <https://www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org/overlooked-in-the-undercounted>