

March 17, 2021

The Honorable Chris Holden
State Capitol, P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0041

RE: AB 285 (Holden) State School Nurse Consultant.
AAP-CA Position: Support

Dear Assemblymember Holden,

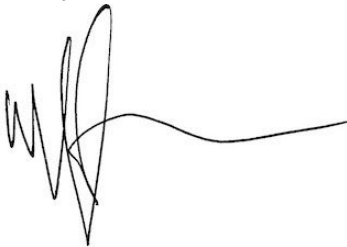
The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA) representing over 3,000 pediatrician members strongly supports AB 285 as amended on February 11, 2021, which would create a State School Nurse Consultant within the California Department of Education.

Schools play a significant role in making sure that students' health care needs are met. Schools administer medications, vision tests, EpiPens, and strive to improve student mental health. According to a policy statement from the American Public Health Association, school health programs may be able to reduce absenteeism, drop-out rates, and behavioral problems.¹ Yet over 47 percent of the California's schools are without access to credentialed school nurses. Currently, California is one of only 10 states without a school nurse official at the state level.

A State School Nurse Consultant in the Department of Education could provide technical assistance to school districts as they reopen after the COVID-19 pandemic, guidance on how to address the many physical and mental health issues that may arise due to the pandemic and on how to implement required health screenings and immunizations, facilitate development of mental health policies, standards, and guidelines, and help plan for the Local Educational Agency Medi-Cal Billing Option Program and the School-Based Medi-Cal Administrative Activities Program. Guidance from an experienced School Nurse at the state level would enhance the school health perspective at the Department of Education, which will better serve California students.

AAP-CA strongly supports AB 285. Thank you for your public service and leadership on behalf of the health and wellbeing of children, youth, and families in California.

Sincerely,



Wendy Hunter, M.D. FAAP
Member, State Government Affairs Committee
American Academy of Pediatrics, California

cc: AAP Leadership

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<https://www.apha.org/policies-and-advocacy/public-health-policy-statements/policy-database/2014/07/09/14/35/public-health-and-education-working-collaboratively-across-sectors-to-improve-high-school-graduation>