

April 6, 2021

The Honorable Sharon Quirk-Silva
State Capitol
Room 6012
Sacramento, CA 94249

RE: AB-552 (Quirk-Silva) Integrated School-Based Behavioral Health Partnership Program
AAP-CA Position: SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Quirk-Silva,

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA) representing over 3,000 pediatrician members strongly supports AB 552, as introduced on February 10, 2021. AB 552 would create the Integrated School-Based Behavioral Health Partnership Program, which would provide early intervention for, and access to, behavioral services for all students.

More than 50 percent of mental illness cases begin by age 14. For children whose mental health concerns go unnoticed or untreated, especially those between the ages of 12 and 17, rates of substance abuse, depression, and lower school achievement increase leading to other health-related problems and a lower quality of life. Addressing behavioral health conditions as early as possible is critical in promoting the health and well-being of students. By providing early intervention services at schools, behavioral health conditions can be identified at the earliest onset. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated what was already a difficult situation with the numbers of young people experiencing suicidal ideation and mental health crises significantly increasing. Behavioral and mental health is a top priority for AAP-CA. The needs are great. Prevention, screening, diagnosis, referrals, and treatment are imperative.

AB 552 would establish a collaborative program between the Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) and the county behavioral health agencies through a memorandum of understanding (MOU). The MOU would include staffing schools with at least one mental health professional, as well as establishing processes for the delivery of services and types of services. The MOU would also cover requirements for assisting pupils with private insurance and reimbursement procedures as well as referrals.

AAP-CA strongly supports AB 552. Thank you for your public service and leadership on behalf of the health and wellbeing of children, youth, and families in California.

Sincerely,



Nancy Graff, MD FAAP
Chair, State Government Affairs Committee
American Academy of Pediatrics, California

cc: AAP Leadership