

April 29, 2021

The Honorable Kevin McCarty  
State Capitol P.O. Box 942849  
Sacramento, CA 94249-0007

**RE: AB-740 Foster youth: suspension and expulsion**  
**AAP-CA Position: SUPPORT**

Dear Assemblymember McCarty,

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA) representing over 3,000 pediatrician members strongly supports AB 740, as amended on April 8, 2021. This bill would require school districts to notify a foster child's state-appointed attorney of any suspensions, pending suspensions, involuntary school transfers, and expulsion proceedings within the same time frame that they are required to notify a child's parent or guardian.

Students in foster care receive lower grades, are less likely to graduate high school or attend college, have higher rates of chronic absenteeism, and are suspended more often than their non-foster peers. In California, students in foster care are suspended at four times the statewide average rate. When broken down by student demographic, this disparity is even starker: the suspension for Black foster students is more than six times the statewide average. In Sacramento County, one in every five students in foster care was suspended at least once in the 2018-19 academic year.<sup>1</sup>

Guardians of students in foster care often lack the time, training, or background to advocate for the educational rights of students in their care. Furthermore, foster youth may cycle through multiple placements, which disrupts their education and makes advocacy within a school even less likely. In 2014, 75% of foster students in the U.S. experienced at least one unscheduled school change.

Foster youth need a consistent advocate, which can be found in their court-appointed attorney. Current law requires that a foster student's attorney be notified of any pending discretionary expulsion proceedings. However, there is no such requirement for other disciplinary proceedings such as mandatory expulsions, involuntary school transfers, or suspensions – all of which can have serious negative impacts on students.

AB 740 protects the educational rights of students in foster care by requiring their state-appointed attorney to be notified of disciplinary proceedings in order to ensure the student has a qualified person advocating on their behalf.

AAP-CA strongly supports AB 740. Thank you for your public service and leadership on behalf of the health and wellbeing of children, youth, and families in California.

Sincerely,



Zarah Iqbal, MD FAAP  
Member, State Government Affairs Committee  
American Academy of Pediatrics, California

cc: AAP Leadership

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sg/fosteryouth.asp>