

March 24, 2021

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

RE: AB 768 (Holden) School Safety: aquatic and pool safety program: model policy
AAP-CA Position: SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Holden,

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA) representing over 3,000 pediatrician members strongly supports AB 768, as amended on March 11, 2021, which would require the Division of Boating and Waterways, Department of Education (DOE), and Department of Public Health (DPH) to create updated pool and open water safety policies and programming for schools, caregivers, and students.

Drowning is the leading cause of death among children 1-4 years old in California and in the U.S. According to the California Department of Developmental Services (DDS) as of May 2019, they provided services to 775 nonfatal drowning victims who survived a drowning situation but require lifelong assistance.

Existing law in California required the Division of Boating and Waterways, in cooperation with the DOE and other appropriate entities involved with water safety, to develop an aquatic safety program to be made available for public elementary schools and for them to notify schools and school districts of the availability of the aquatic safety program.

AB 768 would require that the model policy be created for local educational agencies that serve pupils from kindergarten to grade 12 and to establish a deadline for local educational agencies to adopt an aquatic and pool safety program that is based on the model policy. In a letter to the public in May 2019, Governor Gavin Newsom stated, "Knowing how to prevent drowning is a critical step in keeping children safe." AB 768 would be a step toward making sure that schools can contribute to the public awareness about the evidence-based interventions that would keep California's children safe around water.

AAP-CA strongly supports AB 768 with the following suggestion: replace the wording stating that a model aquatic and pool safety program can significantly reduce youth drowning to state that *a model aquatic and pool safety program can provide education promoting evidence-based interventions.*

Thank you for your public service and leadership on behalf of the health and wellbeing of children, youth, and families in California.

Sincerely,



Phyllis Agran, MD FAAP
Chair, AAP-CA OC Committee On Injury American Academy of Pediatrics, California & Violence Prevention
Member, AAP National Executive Committee Council on Injury & Violence Prevention

cc: AAP Leadership