

April 14, 2021

The Honorable Anthony Portantino
State Capitol, Room 5050
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB-237 (Portantino) Special education: dyslexia risk screening
AAP-CA Position: SUPPORT

Dear Senator Portantino,

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA) representing over 3,000 pediatrician members strongly supports SB 237, as amended on March 3, 2021. This bill would require elementary schools to screen students in kindergarten to grade 2 annually for dyslexia.

Latest estimates indicate that 5 to 15 percent of Americans—14.5 to 43.5 million children and adults - have dyslexia, a condition which makes reading and spelling difficult for children and adults regardless of their intelligence. Early intervention is key in reducing frustration and improving educational outcomes. Currently, most children are not diagnosed until they have persistent problems with reading, by which point they have already fallen behind. However, dyslexia can be identified in pre-reading children, and these children can benefit from interventions that help them learn at the same pace as their peers without dyslexia.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics “Early recognition and referral to qualified professionals for evidence-based evaluations and treatments are necessary to achieve the best possible outcome.”¹ SB 237 would require that schools screen students in grades kindergarten to grade 2 and pupils who enroll for the first time on an annual basis, and would encourage schools to follow the California Dyslexia Guidelines prepared under the direction of the Special Education Division of the California Department of Education (CDE).

AAP-CA strongly supports SB 237. 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
Member, State Government Affairs Committee
American Academy of Pediatrics, California

cc: AAP Leadership

¹ <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/127/3/e818>