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May 25, 2018

The Honorable Tom Torlakson
State Superintendent of Public Instruction
1430 N Street, Suite 5602
Sacramento, CA 95814-5901

RE: AB 2022 (Chu): Pupil health: on campus mental health professionals (Support)

Dear Superintendent Torlakson:

The California Conference of Local Health Officers (CCLHO) voted at the CCLHO Semiannual Business Meeting on May 9, 2018 to recommend a Support position on AB 2022 (Chu), a bill that would require schools to have, for every 600 students, at least one mental health professional accessible to students on campus. AB 2022 would also require schools with less than 600 students to employ at least one mental health professional to serve multiple schools, or to enter into a memorandum of understanding with a county agency or community-based organization to provide these services to pupils in the same ratio as larger schools.

CCLHO recommends supporting AB 2022 as increases in mental health resources for students can lead to better health and mental health outcomes for those students. These resources are particularly important as suicide rates have increased in the teenage population over the past several years. Furthermore, three hundred thousand California children between the ages of 4 and 11 have mental health needs, but over 70 percent never receive treatment. This percentage increases for youth living in poverty or with non-English speaking parents, with over 80 percent of these children never receiving mental health treatment. Additionally, many of California children's have experienced some adverse childhood events, further highlighting the need for mental health services.

Schools have been identified as the best setting for mental health prevention and treatment services for school aged children and teens. However, in California relatively few schools provide on campus mental health services, and the ratio of student to pupil support personnel is too high to provide timely access, exemplified by the current student to school counselor ratio of 792 to one; psychologist to student ratio of 1,265 to one, and social worker ratio of 12,870 to one.

Increasing the number of on-campus mental health providers available to students would help address the existing unmet mental health needs of many students. Additionally, unaddressed mental health issues are connected to poor educational outcomes and directly affect a student's attendance, behavior, and readiness to learn.

CCLHO was established in statute in 1947 to advise the California Department of Health Services (now California Department of Public Health), other departments, boards, commissions, and officials of federal, state and local agencies, the Legislature and other organizations on all matters affecting health. CCLHO membership consists of all legally appointed physician health officers in California's 61 city and county jurisdictions.

Superintendent Tom Torlakson
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Should you have any questions, please contact me by email at ken.cutler@co.nevada.ca.us or by phone at 530-265-7154.

Sincerely and on behalf of the CCLHO membership,

Original signed by Dr. Ken Cutler

Ken Cutler, MD, MPH
President, California Conference of Local Health Officers

Cc: Karen L. Smith, MD, MPH, Director and State Public Health Officer, California Department of Public Health