

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™



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California Chapter 2 - Kern | Los Angeles | Riverside | San Bernardino
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The Honorable Richard Pan
Chair, California Senate Committee on Health
1021 O Street, Room 3310
Sacramento, CA 95814

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Re: SB 1019 (Gonzalez) Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans: Mental Health Benefits – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Pan:

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) California Chapter 2, which represents over 1,000 pediatricians, is in full support of SB 1019 (Gonzalez), which would require Medi-Cal Managed Care Plans to conduct outreach and provide education to their enrollees and to primary care physicians regarding the mental health benefits that are covered by their plans. This bill would also require the Department of Health Care Services to develop tools to assess the quality of this care and identify any disparities.

In 2021 the AAP, along with children's hospitals and child psychiatry advocacy groups, came together to declare a national emergency in children's mental health. This crisis has been long brewing. A 2019 study which analyzed national children's health data indicated that as many as one in six US children between the ages of 6 and 17 years old has a mental health illness. These issues have only been exacerbated in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, as more than 140,000 US children experienced the death of a primary or secondary caregiver, and suicide attempts for girls 12-17 years old increased by nearly 51%. As we work to expand access to mental health care, increasing and optimizing the utilization of existing services would play a critical role in ensuring that more of our children can receive the mental health support that they need.

SB 1019 is an imperative step to ensure that all children who need mental health services can access the high quality and equitable care that they require.

Sincerely,

Kamaal A. Jones, MD, FAAP
AAP-CA2