



March 11, 2021

The Honorable Rudy Salas  
California State Assembly  
State Capitol, Room 4016  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: AB 58 (Salas) Youth Suicide Prevention – Support**

Dear Assemblymember Salas,

On behalf of the California State Association of Psychiatrists (CSAP), I write in support of your AB 58, which will improve youth suicide and self-harm prevention.

Youth suicide and self-harm have continued to rise alarmingly in California and across the country. In California, the rate of suicide among those aged 10 to 24 increased 38 percent between 2007 and 2018, according to a report released by the CDC<sup>1</sup> in 2020. Instances of youth committing acts of self-harm increased by 50 percent during the same period from 2009 to 2018. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among youth ages 10 to 24, and one out of every 15 high schools report an attempted suicide each year.

A 2019 United Health Foundation report found that the teen suicide rate increased by 25 percent nationwide from 2016 to 2019 and that California was one of seven states with the most significant increases in teen suicide rates during that same period. Suicide prevention is critical to addressing the serious health crisis posed by the increase of youth suicide and self-harm. School personnel are well-positioned to provide much-needed suicide prevention and to address the mental health needs of students.

In September 2020, the State Auditor released a report titled Youth Suicide Prevention: Local Educational Agencies Lack the Resources and Policies Necessary to Effectively Address Rising Rates of Youth Suicide and Self-Harm, which found that “[s]chools can more effectively assist students if they have appropriate suicide prevention policies in place, if they train their faculty and staff to recognize and respond to youth who are at risk of suicide or self-harm” and “the deficiencies we found in these areas during our review suggest LEAs could do more to address youth suicide and self-harm.”

Among the findings of the audit, it notes that the LEAs that were reviewed had not adopted adequate youth suicide prevention policies and training, that school-based health centers could provide students with better access to mental health professionals, and that LEAs should seek local and federal funding to help increase the number of mental health professionals on school campuses.

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Existing law requires the governing board or body of a county office of education, school district, state special school, or charter school to adopt a policy on pupil suicide prevention, and any training on suicide awareness and prevention to be provided to teachers of pupils in all of the grades served by the LEA. The State Department of Education (CDE) is required to develop and maintain a model policy in accordance with these provisions to serve as a guide for LEAs in developing policies for pupil suicide prevention. The State Department of Public Health (CDPH), in cooperation with CDE, is required to establish a Public School Health Center Support Program to perform specified functions relating to the establishment, retention, or expansion of school health centers in California. Existing law establishes the Administrative Claiming process under which the department is authorized to contract with local governmental agencies and local educational consortia for the purpose of obtaining federal matching funds to assist with the performance of administrative activities relating to the Medi-Cal programs that are provided by a local governmental agency LEA.

AB 58 will improve youth suicide and self-harm prevention by doing the following:

- Require LEAs to review and update its policy on suicide prevention to incorporate best practices identified by CDE;
- Require LEAs to provide suicide awareness and prevention training at the beginning of each school year to teachers;
- Require CDE to develop resources and guidance on how to conduct suicide awareness and prevention training remotely;
- Require CDPH to create a pilot program to establish a school health center at five LEAs located in counties with high rates of youth suicide and self-harm;
- Require DHCS to provide technical assistance to CDE and LEAs to ensure LEAs take full advantage of federal funds for Medi-Cal students.

For these reasons, the California State Association of Psychiatrists supports AB 58 and would like to thank you for your authorship of this measure.

Sincerely,



Paul J. Yoder  
Legislative Advocate

CC: Chair & Members, Assembly Health Committee  
Chair & Members, Assembly Education Committee

<sup>1</sup> Curtin, S.C. (2020). *State Suicide Rates Among Adolescents and Young Adults Aged 10-24: United States, 2000-2018*. Center for Disease Control and Prevention: National Vital Statistics Report, Vol. 69, No. 11.