



April 4, 2023

The Honorable Josh Newman
Chairman, Senate Education Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 6520
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: SB 350 (Ashby) Pupil attendance: excused absences – Support

Dear Chairman Newman,

On behalf of the California State Association of Psychiatrists (CSAP), I write to you in support of SB 350, which would increase the amount of days that a student can be excused from school from one to five days, when the absence is for attending funeral services, grieving the death of the student's immediate family member, or obtaining victim services for violence or abuse.

In California, students who experience the death of a loved one are excused from school for only one day for an in-state funeral, or up to three school days for an out of state funeral. This is problematic because unaddressed childhood grief and trauma is associated with long-term health problems, mental illness, and substance abuse. Additionally, severe abuse in childhood can cause stress that disrupts brain and physical development, increasing the risk for numerous health problems in adulthood, such as heart disease, cancer, substance abuse, and mental illness.

These potential effects further emphasize the need for students who experience severely traumatic experiences to receive victim services, participate in safety planning, or take time off to grieve. Therefore, SB 350 seeks to support students in their grief and ensure they receive the necessary time off after violence or abuse by allowing up to 5 days of excused absences from school for the purposes of: attending funeral services, grieving the death of the student's immediate family member or close friend, obtaining victim services, or participating in safety planning as it relates to violence or abuse.

While no amount of time can replace the hole created by the loss of a family member, SB 350 gives students a full school week of excused absences, as opposed to a single day, to address grief and avoid the negative consequences associated with truancy.

For these reasons, CSAP is pleased to support SB 350.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Yoder', is placed below the word 'Sincerely,'.

Paul Yoder
Legislative Advocate

CC: Members, Senate Education Committee
Senator Angelique Ashby