

# AB 1322 (Berman and O'Donnell)

## Office of School-Based Health Programs

### SUMMARY

AB 1322 would establish an Office of School-Based Health Programs within the California Department of Education, to provide leadership and assistance to schools offering health programs.

### BACKGROUND

Since the early 1990s, K-12 schools have been eligible to receive reimbursement from the federal government for direct health services provided at school sites through a program called Medi-Cal Local Educational Agency (LEA) Billing. Until very recently, these services have been limited to Medi-Cal eligible students enrolled in special education programs. However, due to a federal change known as the "Free Care" rule, this program is about to be dramatically expanded to all Medi-Cal eligible students.

This change allows for many more eligible students to receive health services at school, including health evaluations, physician services, and mental health and counseling services, to name a few. When poorly treated, health and mental health conditions can have a devastating impact on school attendance, behavior, and academic achievement.

Historically, California has lagged behind other states in the amount of federal funding received through the Medi-Cal LEA Billing program. According to the report to the Legislature by Department of Health Care Services in 2016, the national average received was \$412 per eligible student, and

some states have received up to \$1,001 per eligible student.<sup>1</sup> However, California only received \$359 per eligible student. The "Free Care" rule provides an unprecedented opportunity for California schools to reverse this pattern and serve more students.

Many schools also participate in the Medicaid Administrative Activities (MAA) program, which covers administrative costs for activities such as helping families enroll in and access health services for their students through Medi-Cal.

To run smoothly and maximize funding eligibility, schools require support from state agencies responsible for both health and education. However, in California, there is no institutionalized partnership between the Department of Health Care Services, which oversees Medi-Cal, and the California Department of Education to coordinate various health programs and services delivered through schools.

Other states have successfully drawn down federal funds to aid in the administrative costs of supporting schools as they interface with both their state health agencies and the federal government. California has the opportunity to do the same with an Office of School-Based Health Programs.

With the expansion of eligibility to receive federal funds for school-based health services, there is an opportunity for the California Department of Education to play a

<sup>1</sup>[https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/formsandpubs/Documents/Legislative%20Reports/LEA\\_Report\\_FY2016-17.pdf](https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/formsandpubs/Documents/Legislative%20Reports/LEA_Report_FY2016-17.pdf)

vital role in assisting schools that wish to participate and to draw down federal funds.

## **THIS BILL**

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AB 1322 would, by July 1, 2020, establish an Office of School-Based Health Programs within the California Department of Education for the purpose of administering health-related programs and advising on issues related to the delivery of school-based Medi-Cal services in the state.

The bill would also authorize the Office of School-Based Health Programs to develop a workgroup and technical advisory groups to assist in its work.

## **SUPPORT**

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California School-Based Health Alliance  
(cosponsor)  
California School Nurses Organization  
(cosponsor)  
California Teachers Association (cosponsor)  
California State PTA  
Teachers for Healthy Kids (cosponsor)  
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
Children's Defense Fund California  
California Association of School Counselors  
California Association of School  
Psychologists  
Los Angeles Unified School District  
Regional Asthma Management and  
Prevention  
The Los Angeles Trust for Children's Health

## **OPPOSITION**

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None on file

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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