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April 16, 2021

The Honorable Marc Berman
California State Assembly Member
California State Capitol, Room 3123
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 563 (Berman) School-based health programs – SUPPORT

Dear Assembly Member Berman:

On behalf of the National Alliance on Mental Illness - California (NAMI-CA), I am writing to express support of your AB 563 to establish a new Office of School-Based Health and the California Department of Education (CDE).

NAMI-CA is the statewide affiliate of the country's largest mental health advocacy organization, the National Alliance on Mental Illness. Our over 110,000 active advocates and 62 affiliates include many people living with serious mental illnesses, their families, and supporters. NAMI-CA advocates on their behalf, providing education and support to its members and the broader community.

By establishing a state level Office of School-Based Health, AB 563 has the potential to help California maximize available federal funding for critical health care services students may access in a school setting. While many schools in California have invested in school-based health centers, the lack of state level promotion and technical assistance have prevented wider adoption throughout our state. AB 563 requires the new Office of School-Based Health to collaborate with the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) to ensure our education system can make best use of the policy and financing expertise on Medicaid held by DHCS.

Children and youth are experiencing escalating mental health needs and face numerous barriers to accessing care and support. Early data indicate that the COVID-19 public health emergency is further exacerbating children's mental health needs. Now more than ever, California must rise to the challenge of reaching the many young Californians returning to school in need of support, health care, and treatment services.

For these reasons, NAMI-CA is pleased to support AB 563. I may be reached at jessica@namica.org or (916) 567-0163 with any questions you may have. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Jessica Cruz, MPA/HS
Chief Executive Officer