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April 16, 2021

The Honorable Patrick O'Donnell
California State Assembly Member
California State Capitol, Room 4001
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 586 (O'Donnell) Pupil health: health and mental health services: School Health Demonstration Project – 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 586 to establish a School Health Demonstration Project.

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.

The pilot program established under AB 586 will expand students' access to health and behavioral health services. While many schools currently offer school-based health care, this pilot project could expand effective models in areas of the state where school-based health has not yet been adopted. The bill recognizes the importance of making training and technical assistance available to schools that participate, including about requirements for participating in Medi-Cal and receiving federal matching funds. NAMI-CA is pleased to see the demonstration program envisioned in AB 586 would also be evaluated so that lessons can be learned from the pilots and the most effective approaches can be disseminated throughout the state.

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 586. 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