*Please put on your letterhead.* ***Submit letters by Tuesday, March 16, at 5:00 pm****.*

*Submit letters online at* [*https://calegislation.lc.ca.gov/Advocates/*](https://calegislation.lc.ca.gov/Advocates/)*.*

*<Today's Date>*

The Honorable Patrick O’Donnell

Assembly Education Committee

1020 N Street, Room 159
Sacramento, California 95814

**RE: AB 563 (Berman) Office of School-Based Health Programs – SUPPORT**

Dear Assembly Member O’Donnell,

On behalf of [your organization’s name], I am writing in support of *Assembly Bill 563 (Berman): Office of School-Based Health Programs*. AB 563 would establish an Office of School-Based Health programs within the California Department of Education (CDE), to provide leadership and assistance to school districts offering health programs through the public schools.

Prior to COVID, children came to school every day suffering from mental health issues, poor nutrition, asthma, diabetes, and other conditions that seriously impact their ability to succeed. The role of schools as critical partners in delivering health services to students has become even more pronounced during the public health emergency and as schools are returning to in-person learning. From COVID testing and vaccinations to addressing unmet health care needs due to delayed or inaccessible health care, schools are at the frontlines for responding to the health needs of their students. [For LEAs: include information about or an example of the health services provided in your schools and/or the need for more services. For others: add a sentence or two about your organization and why you support school health services.]

Since the early 1990s, 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 LEA Billing Option. School districts also participate in the Medicaid Administrative Activities program, which covers administrative costs for activities such as helping families enroll and access services for their students through Medi-Cal. To run smoothly and maximize funding eligibility, school districts require support from state agencies responsible for both health and education. AB 563 would strengthen the institutional partnership between the Department of Health Care Services and CDE by creating an office within CDE to coordinate various health programs and services delivered through the schools.

Other states have successfully drawn down federal funds to support the administrative costs of assistance to school districts participating in these reimbursement programs and California could do the same to support an Office of School-Based Health Programs. With the expanding ability to receive federal funds for school-based health services to all Medi-Cal students, there is an opportunity for the CDE to play a vital role with assisting districts that wish to participate and draw down federal funds.

AB 563 is an important step to improve access to health services through schools and [your organization’s name] is pleased to support AB 563.

Sincerely,

[Signature, Title of Individual Authorized to Represent Organization]