



The Honorable Susan Talamantes Eggman
 Senate Health Committee
 1021 O Street, Suite 2100
 Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Chair Eggman,

On behalf of The L.A. Trust School Health Policy Roundtable (The Roundtable), we are writing to express strong concerns with SB 326 as currently written, which seeks to modernize the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA), and respectfully request the bill be amended to maintain or increase current levels of funding dedicated to prevention services for children and youth ages 0-25.

The Roundtable is comprised of over 30 cross-sector organizations committed to advancing schools as centers of wellness in Los Angeles County. Thanks to California's historic investments in children's mental health and healthy schools, we're focusing our energy on local implementation of The Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (CYBHI) and Community Schools. Since these investments are mostly one-time in nature, we expected the MHSA would remain a reliable and ongoing funding source that schools could access to bolster, expand, and/or sustain new programs. SB 326 threatens that opportunity, and it is unlikely California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM) reforms or CYBHI's Statewide School-linked Fee Schedule will fully and immediately fund the current breadth of children and youth services funded by the MHSA.

We are primarily concerned with the elimination of the Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) category and set aside for children and youth. PEI funds critical school-based and school-linked programs across the county that support student mental health and wellness. We appreciate that SB 326 now includes a 5% set-aside for upstream prevention and population health approaches and language directing counties to prioritize early intervention services for children and youth. However, as written, SB 326 would likely result in counties spending less—and possibly no money—on school-based prevention programs. This would cut schools off from a reliable funding source with no viable options for filling the gap.

Young people want access to non-clinical services, including art, recreational activities, peer support, restorative justice, and indigenous and cultural healing practices.¹ Programs like The L.A. Trust's Youth Community Ambassador Network, which trains middle and high school students to provide their peers with mental health education, resources, and navigation to services. As one 11th-grade participant shared, "I was able to learn about many new topics which came in handy with helping some friends in need." We risk losing emphasis and investment in universal tier-one interventions if prevention funding were halved with no set aside for children and youth.

We continue to be inspired and encouraged by the Administration and Legislature's commitment to child and youth well-being and healing-centered schools. As such, we urge the Administration and the author to continue refining SB 326 so that MHSA modernization results in counties having adequate resources to reach youth where they are—in schools—with the non-clinical behavioral health supports they need to achieve a healthy, thriving life and not become our future unhoused severely ill adults.

For these reasons, The L.A. Trust School Health Policy Roundtable urges SB 326 be amended to alleviate the concerns we expressed above and to preserve or enhance dedicated prevention funding for children and youth. Please do not hesitate to contact Gabrielle Tilley at g.tilley@thelatrust.org if you have any questions or would like more information.

Sincerely,

The undersigned members of The L.A. Trust School Health Policy Roundtable



Sr. Policy Manager
The Los Angeles Trust for Children's Health

¹ [The L.A. Trust School Health Policy Roundtable BH Coach Youth Survey](#); [Youth-Centered Strategies for Hope: Healing, and Health](#); [Helping Center Youth Voices in Mental Health](#); and [2022 State of Student Wellness](#).

Kristin Makena, Ph.D. LEP
Interim Executive Director
California Association of School
Psychologists

Martha Alvarez
Chief of Legislative Affairs and
Governmental Relations
Los Angeles Unified School District

Terry Kim
Director of Government Relations &
Advocacy
Children's Institute

Paola Schenkelberg
External Affairs Director
Communities In Schools of Los Angeles
(CISLA)

Vanessa Aramayo
Executive Director
Alliance for a Better Community

Jeff Farber
Executive Director
Helpline Youth Counseling

Fatima Clark
Director, Health & The Children's Movement
of CA
Children Now

Sergio J. Morales
Executive Director
California School-Based Health Alliance

Rachel Castaneda
Associate Research Psychologist
UCLA ISAP/APU

Danny Thirakul
Public Policy Coordinator
California Youth Empowerment Network

Angela M. Vázquez, MSW
Policy Director - Mental Health
The Children's Partnership