

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 586

Introduced by Assembly Members O’Donnell and Wood

February 11, 2021

An act to relating to pupil health.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL’S DIGEST

AB 586, as introduced, O’Donnell. Pupil health: mental health services: funding.

Existing law requires a school of a school district or county office of education and a charter school to notify pupils and parents or guardians of pupils no less than twice during the school year on how to initiate access to available pupil mental health services on campus or in the community, as provided. Existing law authorizes a county to use funds from the Mental Health Services Act, enacted by the voters at the November 2, 2004, statewide general election as Proposition 63, to provide a grant to a school district or county office of education, or to a charter school, within the county, for purposes of funding specified activities relating to pupil mental health.

This bill would express the intent of the Legislature to enact legislation that would develop a two-year grant program to assist local educational agencies in building infrastructure and partnerships to secure ongoing federal Medi-Cal funding for mental health services, as provided. The bill would make various findings and declarations regarding pupil mental health.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: no.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

1 SECTION 1. (a) The Legislature finds and declares all of the
2 following:

3 (1) Approximately 6,100,000 million children, nearly 60 percent
4 of all children in California, are enrolled in Medi-Cal.

5 (2) Only 5 percent of low-income children access mental health
6 services in California. Many vulnerable youth who access mental
7 health services rely on their school to do so.

8 (3) Local educational agencies lack the capacity to develop
9 partnerships to access Medi-Cal funding and support school-based
10 mental health services. The current Medi-Cal program tends to be
11 administratively burdensome for local educational agencies.

12 (4) In aggregate, California schools bill far less for Medicaid
13 services than other states.

14 (5) Beginning in April 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic led
15 to school closures, the proportion of children’s mental
16 health-related emergency department visits among all pediatric
17 emergency visits increased and remained elevated through October
18 2020. Compared with 2019, the proportion of mental health-related
19 visits for children 5 to 11 years of age and 12 to 17 years of age
20 increased approximately 24 percent and 31 percent, respectively.

21 (6) In order to address this exacerbated issue, schools need
22 support to invest in mental health services for vulnerable youth.

23 (7) Schools must have the resources necessary to bill under
24 Medi-Cal and generate additional revenue to better support social,
25 emotional, and mental health services for pupils.

26 (b) It is the intent of the Legislature to enact legislation that
27 would develop a two-year grant program to assist local educational
28 agencies in building infrastructure and partnerships to secure
29 ongoing federal Medi-Cal funding for mental health services based
30 on all of the following:

31 (1) The grant program would be tied to robust technical
32 assistance for local educational agencies to build or expand access
33 to the Local Educational Agency Medi-Cal Billing Option Program,
34 county mental health plans, and managed care plans to maximize
35 federal revenue, start up new services, and be self-sustaining.

36 (2) Local educational agencies would use the funds to build the
37 capacity to secure ongoing Medi-Cal funding for mental health
38 support. The participating local educational agencies would have

1 to show a demonstrated commitment to reinvest the revenue to
2 support direct services.

3 (3) Participating local educational agencies would be chosen
4 based on pupil demographics, region, size, capacity, and needs.

5 (4) The infrastructure and partnerships could be achieved
6 through the Local Educational Agency Medi-Cal Billing Option
7 Program, community-based organizations, special education local
8 plan areas, county offices of education, or county health authorities.

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