



April 9, 2015

The Honorable Patrick O'Donnell
Chairman, Assembly Education Committee
Legislative Office Building
1020 N Street, Room 159
Sacramento, CA 95814

SENT VIA FAX: (916) 319-2187

Re: AB 1133 (Achadjian) – SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember O'Donnell,

On behalf of the California Association of School Psychologists, I am writing to support AB 1133 (Achadjian), which would create a prevention and early intervention pilot program to help students from preschool to 3rd grade experiencing school adjustment problems through the delivery of Early Mental Health Initiative (EMHI) services, which have a long track record of success in California .

The rationale for creating the EMHI program in 1991 still resonates today: "It is in California's best interest, both in economic and human terms, to identify and treat minor difficulties that our children are experiencing before those difficulties become major barriers to later success." For 20 years, the EMHI Matching Grant Program was the solution: a highly successful program that provided matching grants to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to provide school-based mental health supports to young pupils experiencing mild to moderate school adjustment difficulties such as isolation, anxiety, and bullying.

The EMHI Grant Matching program was remarkably effective, with 79% of participating students exhibiting improvements that according to the last evaluation report were "exceptional in comparison to evaluations of other programs," and efficient, with services lasting 12-15 weeks and provided by trained aides under the supervision of mental health professionals. The program once served over 15,000 children per year and its services were in great demand. However, the program was defunded in 2012 and has lacked administration since the Department of Mental Health was eliminated in FY 2011/12.

AB 1133 would build on the success of the EMHI program by authorizing the provision of non-financial supports to help LEAs maximize the use of funds that are under local control for EMHI programs. These supports would include 1) outreach to local decision-makers; 2) free regional trainings on eligible services, the potential for these services to fulfill state and locally defined educational priorities, available funding sources, and relevant state and local non-financial resources; and 3) technical assistance to LEAs. The proposed program would benefit young children from preschool to 3rd grade with evidence-based and developmentally appropriate services and be both cost effective and consistent with the principles of local control.

Schools are the most common entry point for mental health services. As the mental health professionals in the education system, school psychologists are advocates of early mental health services. The passage of AB114 sent the responsibility – but not all the funding – for educationally related mental health services to the schools. Passage of this bill will greatly assist schools as they strive to provide services to California's youth.

Thank you for your consideration. We strongly support AB 1133 and ask for your aye vote when the bill is heard before the Assembly Education Committee.

Sincerely,



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President
California Association of School Psychologists
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Cc: Assemblymember Katcho Achadjian, Fax: (916) 319-2135