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May 25, 2018

Karen L. Smith, MD, MPH
Director and State Public Health Officer
California Department of Public Health
1615 Capitol Avenue
PO Box 997377, MS 0500
Sacramento, California 95899-7377

RE: SB 972 (Portantino): Pupil and Student Health: ID Cards-Suicide Prevention
Hotline Telephone Numbers (Support)

Dear Dr. Smith:

The California Conference of Local Health Officers (CCLHO) voted at the CCLHO Semiannual Business Meeting on May 9, 2018 to recommend a Support position on SB 972 (Portantino). SB 972 would require schools serving students in any of the grades between 7th and 12th that issue student identification cards to include the telephone number for a suicide prevention hotline, the Crisis Text Line, or both telephone numbers, on the back of the student identification card.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, studies show that at least 90 percent of teens who kill themselves have some type of mental health issue, such as depression, anxiety, drug or alcohol abuse, or a behavioral problem. Most teens who commit suicide struggle with a mood disorder, which is an illness of the brain. Recently, the California Department of Education adopted a model youth suicide prevention policy to help educate and train counselors and school employees of the signs of suicidal behavior and mental illness. Expanding the policy to provide an easily accessible suicide prevention hotline number on a student's identification cards will be another resource for potential lifesaving help. Overall, an increase in mental health resources for students will lead to improved health and mental health outcomes for those students.

CCLHO was established in statute in 1947 to advise the California Department of Health Services (now California Department of Public Health), other departments, boards, commissions, and officials of federal, state and local agencies, the Legislature and other organizations on all matters affecting health. CCLHO membership consists of all legally appointed physician health officers in California's 61 city and county jurisdictions.

Should you have any questions, please contact me by phone at 530-265-7154 or by email at ken.cutler@co.nevada.ca.us.

Sincerely and on behalf of the CCLHO membership,

Original signed by Dr. Ken Cutler

Ken Cutler, MD, MPH
President, California Conference of Local Health Officers