



PREVENTING VIOLENCE  
AND DEVELOPING  
YOUTH LEADERS

March 19, 2014

Senator Ed Hernandez, Chair  
Senate Health Committee  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

YOUTH ALIVE!  
3300 Elm Street  
Oakland, Ca 94609  
Tel: (510) 594-2588  
Fax: (510) 594-0667  
[mail@youthalive.org](mailto:mail@youthalive.org)  
[www.youthalive.org](http://www.youthalive.org)

**RE: SB 1055 (Liu) Public School Health Centers -- SUPPORT**

Dear Senator Liu,

On behalf of Youth ALIVE!, a national leader in youth violence prevention and federal technical assistance provider for hospitals and communities seeking to reduce gun injuries, I write to express support for *Senate Bill 1055 (Liu): Public School Health Centers*. SB 1055 updates the existing school-based health center (SBHC) grant program to reflect the changing health care and education landscape in California. The Public School Health Center Support Program has existed in statute for eight years yet has never been implemented due to a lack of funding. It is time for this program to be updated and funded to address the state's goals to improve educational outcomes and improve health outcomes at a reduced cost.

Children come to school every day suffering from mental health issues such as exposure to violent trauma, poor nutrition, asthma, diabetes, and other conditions that seriously impact their ability to succeed. Even though about 9 out of 10 California children have health insurance, almost 20% of them did not have a recommended annual preventive medical visit in 2011.

Youth ALIVE!'s mission focuses on violence so we know that violence – and the trauma it brings – is pervasive. It is not enough to simply acknowledge that students are hurting from the trauma they experience; we must help them to heal-body and mind. Ensuring students have safe space to cope with both their physical and mental needs is a wise investment. Healthy students can focus more readily on their studies and are able to find productive ways to work through their problems rather than methods that are disruptive to them and their classmates.

SBHCs are an innovative model that delivers:

1. *Improved Access* – SBHCs offer enhanced access to services by virtue of their convenient location, referral systems, personal relationships, and patient-friendly care.
2. *Prevention and Population Health* – SBHCs extend care outside clinic walls through group and classroom education, school wide prevention, and community outreach.
3. *Integrated and Individualized Support* – SBHCs meet students and families where they are and provide integrated behavioral health, case management, enabling services to students with the greatest health, social or behavioral challenges.
4. *Partnership between Health and Education* – SBHCs are true partners with the school in promoting academic success through youth development, leadership and career pathway opportunities.

Research shows that SBHC users are more likely to have yearly dental and medical check-ups and are less likely to go to the Emergency Room or be hospitalized. Students enrolled in an SBHC are absent three times less often than those students not utilizing an SBHC. Additionally, many SBHCs are located in schools serving some of the state's most vulnerable children. On campuses with SBHCs, about 70% of students receive free or reduced price meals.

Youth ALIVE is a 501c3 nonprofit organization. Our Tax ID is 94-3143254.

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Youth ALIVE!  
Oakland, CA

The Public School Health Center Support Program will ensure that available resources are used efficiently so that California's SBHCs may continue to serve the children and youth most in need. We support SB 1055 and the work of SBHCs across the state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Anne Marks', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Anne Marks  
Executive Director