



American Medical Women's Association
The Vision and Voice of Women in Medicine since 1915

September 4, 2018

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown, Jr.
Governor of the State of California
State Capitol, First Floor
Sacramento, California 95814

**Re: AB 2601 (WEBER)
REQUEST FOR SIGNATURE**

Dear Governor Brown:

The American Medical Women's Association respectfully asks for your signature on AB 2601 (Weber), which requires that charter schools adhere to the comprehensive sexual health education mandates set by the California Healthy Youth Act (CHYA) (AB 329, Weber - 2015). CHYA requires that traditional public school students receive comprehensive sexual health education and HIV prevention education at least once in middle school and in high school, with instruction that is accessible for students with disabilities and English learners.

AB 2601 merely sets a foundational baseline for sexual health education in charter schools, while maintaining significant flexibility for charters to decide what curriculum they adopt, what specific grades to provide instruction, and other curricular elements. AB 2601 has received bipartisan support throughout the legislative process and has no opposition.

Young people need and benefit from sexual health education, but California's large and growing charter student population is not receiving the comprehensive sexual health education that will support them in succeeding and staying healthy. A 2017 study of sexual health education in San Diego charter schools found that 85% of these schools provided some sexual health education, but many did not cover essential topics required by CHYA: only 53% provided instruction on birth control; 35% provided information on sexual orientation; and 29% educated students about talking with parents about sex and relationships.

California's 1,275 charter schools educate 630,000 students—10% of the state's student population. The charter school population is diverse and often underserved: 59% of students are eligible for free and reduced lunch, and 72% are students of color. Quality sexual health education is especially critical for low-income communities and communities of color, which are affected by systemic discrimination, poverty, lack of access to health care, and lifelong health disparities. National research shows that students of color and low-income students have less access to formal sexual health education. At a time when federal funding for adolescent sexual and reproductive



health is being cut, California needs to do more to ensure that charter school students have the same access to comprehensive sexual health education as all other public school students.

AB 2601 would not have a direct fiscal impact on the state because the Commission on State Mandates has determined that charter schools are not eligible for direct reimbursement of mandate costs; thus, this bill cannot trigger a Mandate Block Grant increase. The Commission has not increased the Mandate Block Grant in response to the passage of the California Healthy Youth Act in 2015; if it were to do so, we anticipate that AB 2601's addition of charter schools to CHYA would result in a less than \$50,000 increase in state costs for the Block Grant. Costs to charter schools for curriculum and teacher training would be approximately \$1.3 million or less statewide.

Ensuring that charter schools students receive sexual health education will support them in making healthy decisions and developing skills to lead healthy lives. AB 2601 also advances the wishes of California parents, 89% of whom want students to receive comprehensive education that includes information about prevention methods for HIV, other STIs, and unintended pregnancy. This desire is consistent regardless of the parents' locale, religion, politics, race or education level.

For all these reasons, The American Medical Women's Association respectfully asks for your signature on AB 2601.

Sincerely,



Connie Newman, MD
AMWA President 2018=2019

cc: Assemblymember Shirley N. Weber