

The Honorable Mark Ridley-Thomas  
Room 3152  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
Fax: 916-319-2148

May 17, 2006

Dear Assemblyman Ridley-Thomas,

**AB 2560: School Health Center Administration - SUPPORT**

We are pleased to support AB 2560 and its potential to improve children's health care in California. Given the increasing costs of health care, the inequalities in school success, and the unmet need for children's health care, we believe that school health centers are a smart solution and AB 2560 is a minimal way for the state to support these centers while maximizing the use of existing resources.

Prevent Child Abuse California (PCA CA) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to prevent the abuse and neglect of California's children by building community resources, enhancing public awareness, developing and coordinating prevention programs, and facilitating advocacy activities. PCA CA, a chartered member of Prevent Child Abuse America, has a statewide network of child abuse prevention experts and advocates in every California county. School health centers are in line with our client-centered approach and our understanding that physical health and mental health are both necessary if either is to be achieved.

**School health centers reach children who aren't reached by other services.** School health centers are health clinics which are located at or closely associated with elementary, middle and high schools. At a typical center, nurse practitioners, nurses, mental health providers and/or part-time doctors and medical students provide a variety of preventive, diagnostic and treatment services, including scoliosis screenings, comprehensive physicals, acute illness treatment, prescriptions and immunizations. By locating where children go every day, health centers at schools are able to reach children who might otherwise receive less health care or even be uninsured.

**School health centers are cost-effective.** Studies of school health centers have found associated reductions in unnecessary emergency room use; hospitalizations related to asthma; total prescription drug use (attributed to better preventive care); and travel/work-lost costs to parents. In this time of increasing health costs and ongoing unmet needs, school health centers are an ideal part of the solution because they meet health needs while reducing associated costs.

**AB 2560 is a well-designed bill.** It will facilitate coordination between the Departments of Education and of Health Services in order to reduce redundancy in their work. The bill's coordinating council will provide a forum for the voices of those affected by the program and a means for continuing the improvement of the school health center program. Importantly, the bill also provides a means for data collection and analysis via coordination with the University of California, San Francisco. Thus, the structure and effects of school health centers can continue to be better understood and improved.

California is behind the curve in supporting school health centers. 25 states—half—have more school health centers per child than does California. California children deserve better, but our school health centers need state support for their coordination, efficiency and accountability. AB 2560 will give them that support. Thank you for your work on this important bill.

Sincerely,

*Sheila Anderson*  
President & CEO

**Prevent Child Abuse** California

*Scott Moak*  
Deputy Director, Legislative Affairs

**Prevent Child Abuse** California

cc: Chairwoman Wilma Chan, Assembly Health Committee, Fax: (916) 319-2116  
Chairwoman Jackie Goldberg, Assembly Education Committee, Fax: (916) 319-2145