

Senator Patricia Bates  
24031 El Toro Road, Suite 201A  
Laguna Hills, California 92653

Dear Senator Bates,

We need your help to improve the educational experience for our students by supporting AB-8: Pupil Health – Mental Health Professionals. The California State PTA strongly supports this legislation to mandate a maximum counselor to student ratio at 1:600 in all our public schools.

The American School Counselor Association recommends a counselor ratio of 1:250, though the national average is 1:464. California today has on average a ratio of 1:708<sup>i</sup>, which varies greatly by school district. In Capistrano Unified School District, California's seventh largest district, the ratio is 1:1,000 in elementary and middle school. Our high school counselors are even more thinly spread at a ratio of 1:1,300.

At these ratios, our counselors are unable to effectively reach and positively impact as many students as have needs. AB-8 would help our students gain access to professional mental health experts and get California closer to the recommended ratio.

Studies show that increased numbers of trained, caring adults on campuses provide the support and resources our students need to make safe and healthy decisions. Trained professionals positively guide students and assist with the emotional, social, and academic challenges that middle school and high school present. We need additional school counselors on all of our campuses.

This guidance can significantly help to reduce the instances of suicide, which is now the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death for youth aged 10-24 years (and only slightly behind death related to vehicular accidents). Just this past week, suicide caused our community to once again mourn the loss of a bright inquisitive student who was negatively impacted by challenging years that are typical of adolescence.

We need you to support our students, your future constituents, and vote to support AB-8. Our state benefits from a well-educated, healthy - both physically and mentally, population. We **MUST** ensure our youth have access to the resources they need for a successful, healthy future.

In addition to your support for AB-8, please also strongly consider allocating the necessary funds to pay for the increased counselors on campuses outside of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). While we understand that districts are already struggling to make ends meet under LCFF, AB-8 cannot be viewed as an unfunded mandate.

Thank you for your time and support of AB-8: Pupil Health – Mental Health Professionals. We appreciate your leadership and attention to the programs critical to our future of our children.

Sincerely,

Name:

Home Address:

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<sup>i</sup> American School Counselor Association, "Student-to-School-Counselor Ratio 2015-2016"