*[organizational letterhead / logo]*

March [\_\_], 2021

The Honorable Senator Anthony J. Portantino, Chair

Senate Appropriations

State Capitol, Room 2206

Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: Senate Bill 224 (SB 224) – Pupil instruction: mental health education**

Dear Senator Portantino,

I am writing to express my strong support for SB 224, which would ensure that California students receive crucial mental health education. *[add sentence describing your organization’s mission statement / connection to this issue.]*

Children and youth are experiencing escalating mental health needs, and face numerous barriers to accessing care and support. According to the most recent [Commonwealth Fund Scorecard](https://2020scorecard.commonwealthfund.org/files/California.pdf) on State Health System Performance, California ranks 48th in the nation for providing children with needed mental health care. Early data indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic is further exacerbating children’s mental health needs. For example, the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6945a3.htm) reported that beginning in April 2020, the proportion of mental-health related emergency department visits among all pediatric emergency department visits increased by 24% for children ages 5-11 and by 31% for children ages 12-17. *[consider adding 1-3 sentences describing the mental health impacts on youth that your organization has observed during COVID-19]*

Now more than ever, it is critical that California equip all of its students with the information and tools necessary to promote positive mental health, and to seek mental health support and treatment when needed. SB 224 will ensure that students receive mental health education from a qualified instructor at least once during elementary school, once during middle school, and once during high school. This education will help increase awareness, empower students to seek support, and reduce the stigma associated with experiencing mental health challenges.

We are proud to support SB 224 and to work together towards a future in which all of California’s children and youth receive the mental health care that they need and deserve.

Sincerely,

[*signature*]

*[Name, Title]*

*[Organization]*

*[Contact information]*