



June 1, 2026

The Honorable Sasha Renee Perez
Chair, Senate Education Committee
1021 O Street, Room 6740
Sacramento, CA 95814

SUBJECT: AB 1626 (Gabriel) — SUPPORT

Dear Senator Perez:

Every day, California hospitals see firsthand the growing number of young people in mental health crisis. Being able to spot the signs that a person is struggling and help them find support before their condition worsens is an important step toward improving this crisis. Athletic coaches have a unique perspective and ability to support their athletes' physical **and** mental health needs, which is why **the California Hospital Association, on behalf of nearly 400 hospitals and health systems, supports Assembly Bill (AB) 1626 (Gabriel, D-Encino).**

For collegiate student-athletes, sports can provide an important and effective physical outlet — but many young athletes face pressure to perform at increasingly higher levels. Research shows that students who are struggling are often most comfortable reaching out to people with whom they already have relationships; as such, it is important to equip athletic coaches with tools to support their student-athletes' mental health. AB 1626 would require college coaches to complete mental health training identified by the California Department of Education — training that two-thirds of youth sports coaches say they want to receive.

For these reasons, CHA requests your “YES” vote on AB 1626.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Leah Barros", with a long, sweeping underline.

Leah Barros
Consulting Lobbyist, California Hospital Association

cc: The Honorable Jesse Gabriel
The Honorable Members of the Senate Education Committee
Michelle Nguyen, Principal Consultant, Senate Education Committee
Amanda Richie, Consultant, Senate Republican Caucus