



Youth for Neurodiversity Inc.

June 23, 2026

The Honorable Sabrina Cervantes
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 7330
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SUPPORT for AB 1669 (Pacheco): Student health: medical leaves of absence: mental health.

Dear Chair Cervantes and Members of the Senate Appropriations Committee,

On behalf of Youth for Neurodiversity Inc. (YND), a California-based, youth-led international nonprofit with 70+ student leaders and allies dedicated to empowering neurodivergent youth, I write in strong support of AB 1669 (Pacheco).

On April 15, 2026, YND joined GENup, California's largest youth-led education justice organization, for a [Lobby Day](#) in Sacramento, where youth advocates met directly with legislators to champion student mental health. As a youth-led organization, we believe student voices must be central to shaping the policies that affect us.

Neurodivergent students are especially impacted by the challenges AB 1669 seeks to address. They face disproportionately high rates of bullying and isolation. Nearly 20% of autistic teens experience depression, compared to 8% of neurotypical teens.¹ Nearly 20% of students drop out of school, and among those who reach college, almost 70% choose not to disclose their learning difference, suffering without accommodations.² Many need time away to stabilize and recover, yet current policies can create unnecessary barriers that discourage students from seeking help or force them to leave school permanently. AB 1669 removes these obstacles and ensures that students can prioritize their wellbeing without sacrificing their education.

AB 1669 would require public and private colleges and universities in California to establish clear policies for voluntary medical leaves of absence, including for mental health reasons. Students would be able to take up to one academic year (or longer if the institution allows) without having to formally withdraw, receive reasonable accommodations without being required to submit medical documentation, and retain the right to re-enroll in good academic standing.

We urge the Committee to support AB 1669 and advance it toward passage. California has an opportunity to lead the nation in student-centered policies by ensuring that students facing mental health challenges in higher education are not forced to choose between their health and their future.

Thank you for your leadership on student mental health, education, and success. YND would be pleased to provide additional student perspectives or testimony in support of this bill. I can be reached at info@youthfornd.org.

Sincerely,

Aashna Parsa

Aashna Parsa
Founder and President
Youth for Neurodiversity Inc.

¹ Newport Academy. Mental Health Challenges Faced by Neurodivergent Teens. 2025, www.newportacademy.com/resources/mental-health/neurodivergent-teens.

² Horowitz, Sheldon H., et al., *The State of Learning Disabilities: Understanding the 1 in 5*, National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2017, tinyurl.com/2017-sld-report