



April 16, 2024

Assemblymember Muratsuchi  
Chair, Assembly Education Committee  
Capitol Office  
1021 O Street, Suite 5610  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 2441 (Kalra) – as introduced SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Muratsuchi,

Children's Defense Fund-California is pleased to support AB 2441 (Kalra), which will eliminate most of the overreaching statutory mandates that require school staff to notify law enforcement about common school-related behavior. AB 2441 will protect students from unnecessary contact with the criminal-legal system and help keep students in school.

Children's Defense Fund-California has a long history supporting the termination of the school-to-prison pipeline. AB 2441 takes a significant step towards achieving that goal by providing more flexibility for school site staff and local educational agencies to employ alternative remedies rather than notifying law enforcement. This bill opens new opportunities for transformative policy changes and greater agency for individuals to respond with methods that are currently restricted.

Decades of research show that young people suffer long-term harm when they are subjected to even minimal contact with the juvenile or criminal legal systems. Young people arrested in school are less likely to graduate from high school and more likely to become incarcerated.<sup>1</sup> Our existing system has also led to troubling disparities in the type of students who are most likely to suffer these long-term consequences. Alarming, Black, Indigenous, and Latine students, as well as students with disabilities, are disproportionately referred to law enforcement, cited, and arrested.<sup>2</sup>

Yet existing law often forces teachers, school administrators, and staff to notify law enforcement even when they know it will be counterproductive and when they prefer to address the issue with more effective alternative approaches.

AB 2441 makes positive and common sense changes to existing law. First, it eliminates outdated, zero-tolerance mandates for school notification of law enforcement, thereby empowering schools to adopt non-punitive, supportive, trauma-informed and health-based approaches to school related behaviors. These alternatives to addressing student behavior have been shown to promote campus safety and positive student mental health.

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<sup>1</sup> Sweeten, G. (2006). Who Will Graduate? Disruption of High School Education by Arrest and Court Involvement, *Justice Quarterly*, 24(4), 462-480.

<sup>2</sup> Mendoza, M., et al. (2020). Race, Gender, and Disability and the Risk for Juvenile Justice Contact. *The Journal of Special Education*, 53(4), 226-235.

Second, the bill protects educators by eliminating the prosecution of school staff who fail to report incidents of alleged assaults or physical threats against school employees.

AB 2441 will keep students in school by allowing educators to choose the most effective approach to address student behavioral issues, and protecting students from unnecessary contact with the criminal-legal system that perpetuates the school-to-prison pipeline.

For these reasons, Children's Defense Fund-California supports AB 2441.

Sincerely,

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cc: Members and Committee Staff, Assembly Education Committee