

March 30, 2021

Honorable Senator Richard Pan
Chair, Senate Committee on Health
California State Capitol
Sacramento, CA

RE: Senate Bill 682 (Rubio) – Support

Dear Chair Richard Pan,

The Arthritis Foundation encourages the Senate Committee on Health to support Senate Bill 682. The bill would require California Health and Human Services Agency, in collaboration with the departments under its purview, to develop and implement a plan that establishes targets to reduce racial disparities in health outcomes by 50% by December 31, 2030 for chronic conditions affecting children. The bill would require the agency to submit a plan to the State Legislature and post the plan on the state HHS website on or before January 1, 2023. The legislation also stipulates implementation of the plan no later than June 30, 2023.

Perhaps while arthritis is not commonly considered a chronic condition that impacts children, 300,000 children in the United States have juvenile arthritis or a juvenile rheumatic disease. Specifically, this includes more than 30,000 children in California. Early diagnosis and treatment are critical for disease management, and it can be difficult for providers untrained in pediatric rheumatology to diagnose arthritis. Pediatricians tend to not be adequately trained to care for children with juvenile arthritis, while adult rheumatologists are not trained to deal with pediatric issues – including stunted bone growth that can result from arthritis and its treatment or the specific requirements of providing care to an adolescent. Treatment of juvenile arthritis is complex, and there are many potential co-morbidities and related diseases, such as uveitis and temporomandibular joint disorders. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, the average child in California must travel 20 miles to see a pediatric rheumatologist and, in some cases, needs to go as far as 259 miles to seek care.¹ These issues are even further exacerbated for people of color. A plan, like the one proposed in SB 682, can assist in providing necessary information and data on unique challenges that racial disparities create for children with chronic diseases.

Arthritis does not discriminate. It does not care about race, creed, income level or age. Yet we know there are deep-rooted inequities that affect health outcomes. The Arthritis Foundation supports work to reduce racial disparities in health outcomes. We must work strategically to overcome inequities in delivery of care. Senate Bill 682 is a first step in the right direction to reduce health disparities for children with chronic conditions such as arthritis.

On behalf of the more than 5.7 million people and 30,000 children in California with arthritis, the Arthritis Foundation strongly urges the Senate Committee on Health to support SB 682.

¹ https://downloads.aap.org/AAP/PDF/Advocacy/California_SubspecialtyFactSheet.pdf

Sincerely,



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CC: Members, Senate Committee on Health

