



# YOUTH LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

## Use Your Voice

March 27th, 2024

The Honorable James C. Ramos  
State Assembly  
1021 O Street, Suite 8310  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Assemblymember Ramos:

Youth Leadership Institute is pleased to support AB 2711, legislation aimed at implementing a public health strategy to assist youth with substance use needs. This legislation prioritizes keeping youth engaged in their education, establishes a community support system, and facilitates access to behavioral health services and resources.

Currently, under California Education Code §48900, school officials possess the discretion to determine whether to suspend or expel a student for drug use and/or possession on school grounds. However, a standardized protocol for offering support to youth and addressing the root causes of their substance use is lacking. Moreover, administrative discretion has resulted in a disproportionate impact on certain demographics: more than 59 percent of drug-related suspensions involve boys, over 83 percent affect socioeconomically disadvantaged students, and approximately 82 percent involve youth of color.<sup>1</sup> These suspensions deprive youth of valuable instructional time, thereby heightening the risk of academic disengagement, dropout, and involvement in the juvenile justice system.<sup>2</sup>

yli partners with thousands of youth across the state, the majority of whom are low-income youth of color. In recent years, mental health and substance use have become the core issues around which most of our programming focuses. Our youth depend on us to pass policies that work effectively to address these health crises.

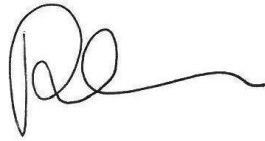
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<sup>1</sup> Children Now Analysis of [California Department of Education](#) Suspension and Expulsion Data, 2022-23.

<sup>2</sup> [The Civil Rights Project](#) 2018

AB 2711 would require schools to use a public health framework before employing suspension and expulsion policies. By implementing this approach, this bill will help stem drug use and addiction, ensuring all students receive the help they want and need, remain in school, graduate, and are able to thrive. For these reasons, we support AB 2711 and request your "Aye" vote.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'PB', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

PATRICIA BARAHONA

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Youth Leadership Institute