



March 28, 2023

The Honorable Nancy Skinner
State Assembly
1021 O St., Suite 8630
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support – SB 274 (Skinner)

Dear Assembly Member Skinner:

The California Youth Empowerment Network (CAYEN) is pleased to support SB 274 (Skinner), which would eliminate the sunset on willful defiance suspensions for middle school students, extend this safeguard to high school students, and prohibit suspensions based solely on truancy, tardiness, or attendance records.

The California Youth Empowerment Network (CAYEN) is a youth-led statewide network comprised of TAY Action Teams and CAYEN Board members which engages, empowers and represents Transitional Age Youth (TAY), ages 15-26, in mental health advocacy on issues that directly affect TAY. Since CAYEN's inception in 2006, CAYEN has taken many forms of action to empower TAY in their personal lives and spark progressive change in public policy.

Suspending students for willful defiance is detrimental to the academic and personal development of our transitional age youth. Our education system is meant to challenge our youth to think critically, independently, and seek truth. To suspend our youth for willful defiance such as "talking back" does not provide learning opportunities. In fact, research demonstrates that suspending students for any reason increases the likelihood that the student will have future contact with the justice system. Research also shows that positive behavior intervention, support models, and restorative justice are more effective than suspension at managing behavioral expression.

For these reasons, we SUPPORT SB 274. If you or your staff have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at dthirakul@mhac.org, or our Interim Director of Public Policy, Karen Vicari at kvicari@mhacofca.org.

In Community,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Thirakul", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Danny Thirakul
Public Policy Coordinator
California Youth Empowerment Network