

June 7, 2023

The Honorable Christopher M. Ward
California State Assembly
1021 O St., Suite 8320
Sacramento, CA 95814



RE: Assembly Bill 275

Dear Assembly Member Ward:

The California Youth Empowerment Network (CAYEN) is pleased to support Assembly Bill 275 (Ward), which will allow school district boards and county boards of education to provide compensation to student members by offering a stipend for their work.

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.

As an organization that is run for TAY by TAY, we know that representation matters, specifically youth representation. As a society we elect members of our community to represent us in government and we compensate them for their time. Student members have a constituency and unique knowledge and are chosen to advocate and inform on decisions regarding the youth perspective. This requires time, outreach, and research. Board members are compensated for the work they do within the scope of their position. Our youth should be equally compensated for the same work.

For these reasons, we support Assembly Bill 275. 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,

Danny Thirakul
Public Policy Coordinator
California Youth Empowerment Network