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Resolution 10-04-2016, to create a High School Health Class Requirement.pdf

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RESOLUTION 10-04-2016

DIGEST
Education: A One-semester Course in “Health” for High School Graduation
Amends Education Code section 51225.3 to create a requirement for high school students to complete a course in “Health” to graduate.

TEXT OF RESOLUTION

RESOLVED that the Conference of California Bar Associations recommends that legislation be sponsored to amend Education Code section 51225.3 to read as follows:

§51225.3
(a) A pupil shall complete all of the following while in grades 9 to 12, inclusive, in order to receive a diploma of graduation from high school:
(1) At least the following numbers of courses in the subjects specified, each course having a duration of one year, unless otherwise specified:
(A) Three courses in English.
(B) Two courses in mathematics. If the governing board of a school district requires more than two courses in mathematics for graduation, the governing board of the school district may award a pupil up to one mathematics course credit pursuant to Section 51225.35.
(C) Two courses in science, including biological and physical sciences.
(D) Three courses in social studies, including United States history and geography; world history, culture, and geography; a one-semester course in American government and civics; and a one-semester course in economics.
(E) One course in visual or performing arts or foreign language. For purposes of satisfying the requirement specified in this subparagraph, a course in American Sign Language shall be deemed a course in foreign language.
(F) Two courses in physical education, unless the pupil has been exempted pursuant to the provisions of this code.
(G) A one-semester course in health.
(b) The governing board, with the active involvement of parents, administrators, teachers, and pupils, shall adopt alternative means for pupils to complete the prescribed course of study that may include practical demonstration of skills and competencies, supervised work experience or other outside school experience, career technical education classes offered in high schools, courses offered by regional occupational centers or programs, interdisciplinary study, independent study, and credit earned at a postsecondary educational institution. Requirements for graduation and specified alternative modes for completing the prescribed course of study shall be made available to pupils, parents, and the public.
(c) If a pupil completed a career technical education course that met the requirements of subparagraph (E) of paragraph (1) of subdivision (a) of Section 51225.3, as amended by the act adding this section, before the inoperative date of that section, that course shall be deemed to fulfill the requirements of subparagraph (E) of paragraph (1) of subdivision (a) of this section.
(d) This section shall become operative upon the date that Section 51225.3, as amended by the act adding this section, becomes inoperative.
The Problem: California is experiencing a health care emergency, and it is mostly caused by obesity. Obesity is a condition that can be prevented, especially in young people. State Controller John Chiang recently reported: “The economic cost to California of adults who are obese, overweight, and physically inactive is equivalent to more than a third of the State’s total budget.” “California Wellness Plan,” California Department of Public Health (CDPH) p. 9 (2014). The CDPH also reported: “California has the highest obesity-related costs in the United States, estimated at $15.2 billion with 41.5% of these costs financed through Medicare and Medi-Cal.” “Obesity in California: the Weight of the State, 2000-2012,” CDPH, p. 4, n. 42 (2014). The State Controller and the CDPH are telling us that we have a very expensive healthcare problem, and that we must control it.

The Solution: If Californians were able to lose some weight, then we would save money on treatment costs. For example, the CDPH reported: “If adult BMI [Body Mass Index] was reduced by 5%, California could save $81.7 billion in obesity-related health care costs by 2030. "Obesity in California," CDPH, p. 4, n. 44 (2014). Prevention is necessary to reduce the trends, and it must be taught to our youth. Fortunately, California is able to influence every teenager by adding a one-semester course in “health” to its list of high school graduation requirements.

Education Code §51225.3 currently requires thirteen one-year-long courses for high school graduation. This means that most high school students can complete the state requirements within the first three years of high school. As a result, adding a one-semester health course requirement would displace an elective course. Yes, it will cost money for every school district to add a “health course” requirement. The issue is whether to invest in prevention – or to keep spending outrageous sums of money on expensive medical treatments.

New York already requires a one-half-year course in health for high school graduation. Chapter 11 Regulations of the Commissioner, State of New York, §135.3 Health Education (c). Fortunately, the California Department of Education has already created a curriculum for a high school “health” class, and it includes lessons in proper nutrition, diet and exercise. The curriculum has already been developed, and all we need to do is to apply it to every California high school student.

IMPACT STATEMENT
This proposed resolution does not affect any other law, statute or rule.

CURRENT OR PRIOR RELATED LEGISLATION
“The California Healthy Young Act,” added by Stats., 2015, Ch. 398 (established a high school graduation requirement for comprehensive sex education).
“The Pupil Nutrition, Health, and Achievement Act of 2001,” added by Stats. 2001, Ch. 913 (established requirements for healthier foods and beverages to be provided by school nutrition programs).

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