



March 20, 2016

Assemblymember Marc Levine
California State Capitol
P.O. Box 942849
Room 2141
Sacramento, CA 94249-0010

Dear Assemblymember Levine:

We are writing on behalf of the Academy for Eating Disorders, an international professional association comprised of researchers and clinicians committed to eating disorders research, education, treatment, and prevention. The Academy for Eating Disorders strongly supports AB 2539, legislation aimed at the protection and wellbeing of professional models in California by

- a) requiring a health certification from a physician attesting that a model is not at a dangerously low body weight and at risk for an eating disorder
- b) classifying models as employees of modeling agencies affording them workplace protections and entitling them to safe, non-coercive working environments.

Eating disorders are serious illnesses that can have grave medical consequences, which is further reflected in the fact that eating disorders have the highest mortality rate of any mental illness. Due to the intense pressure to maintain dangerously low body weights as a near pre-requisite for participation in the industry, professional models have been identified as a group at particularly high risk. As the legislation correctly points out, most models are minors when first entering into the industry, putting them at even increased risk for workplace pressures that can potentially result in irreparable physical and psychological harm. When models are classified as independent contractors, they do not have the attendant workplace protections and access to healthcare and healthcare professionals afforded to those classified as employees. The workplace protections, health certifications, health advisory postings related to eating disorders, along with required checkups and consultations with qualified health professionals proposed in AB 2539 are an important first step in mitigating this risk in a particularly vulnerable population.

In addition to the direct protection of professional models, we are also supportive of the recognition in AB 2539 that the propagation



of mass media images of unrealistically thin models is itself dangerous to children and young adults. At risk children and adolescents who receive distorted or negative messages about societal norms related to weight and body shape are more likely to develop mental health issues including increased risk of developing an eating disorder. The preventative intent of this legislation is especially important in light of the increasing rates of children and adolescents reporting body dissatisfaction and engaging in dangerous behaviors related to weight-control.

As professionals and advocates, and on behalf of those directly affected by the devastation of eating disorders, the Academy for Eating Disorders would like to extend our support of AB 2539. It is necessary legislation for the health of models and to protect the general public from unhealthy images.

Sincerely,

The Academy For Eating Disorders