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January 10, 2018

The Honorable Tony Thurmond  
Chairman, Assembly Committee on Labor and Employment  
Legislative Office Building  
1020 N Street, Room 15  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Chairman Thurmond:

The Strategic Training Initiative for the Prevention of Eating Disorders (STRIPED) is a transdisciplinary training program based at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and Boston Children's Hospital that brings together experts in eating disorders and a range of disciplines to develop innovative approaches to eating disorders prevention. STRIPED strongly supports AB 1576 (Levine), legislation addressing the problem of eating disorders and sexual harassment in the fashion industry by requiring talent agencies to provide sexual harassment prevention and health standards training programs to its actors, models, and other entertainers.

While modeling appears to be a glamorous profession, eating disorders and sexual harassment in the modeling industry are a serious problem. Models are frequently pressured to lose weight and often face dismissal from jobs if they are unable to do so. As a result, many models have suffered from the serious and sometimes fatal effects of anorexia and related health problems because of the lack of workplace protections. Notably, the fashion industry saturates our media with images that promulgate distorted and unhealthy weight, shape, and beauty ideals for girls and young women. The high numbers of youth engaging in dangerous behaviors in attempts to control their weight and shape in addition to the well-documented health risks of eating disorders underscore the importance of this legislation.

Eating disorders and sexual harassment both disproportionately affect young women. Individuals working in fashion are also particularly vulnerable as it is consistently shown in research that the fashion industry is a high-risk context for both these concerns. Thus fashion models, who are predominantly female, are at increased risk both due to their gender and their occupation. Both eating disorders and sexual harassment are serious conditions with severe detrimental consequences to the health and safety of professional models. These consequences can be both immediate and short-term, but also long-term and irreversible when they occur during adolescence and young adulthood. This is a critical developmental period and models most often fall within this age bracket. In this way, professional models are uniquely vulnerable due to their high risk of experiencing sexual harassment and eating disorders, and the severity of the impact of these experiences on their long-term health.

Sexual harassment and sexual assault are both causally linked to the development of eating disorders as well as other detrimental behaviors and mental illnesses. In sum, given that the fashion industry represents a high-risk environment for both eating disorders and sexual assault, that these concerns

are causally linked, and that they both have severe negative impacts on the health of professional models, any effective approach to protecting the health of models should target both of these concerns concurrently.

AB 1576 will not only take a much needed step toward protecting the safety and health and wellbeing of models, but also will change the messages girls and young women receive about what our society values. For these reasons, we strongly support AB 1576 and urge your support of this groundbreaking legislation in California.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Bryn Austin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

S. Bryn Austin, ScD  
Director, Strategic Training Initiative for the Prevention of Eating Disorders  
Professor of Pediatrics, Harvard Medical School