



SB 1010 – Drowning Prevention

Drowning Prevention and Water Safety Education in Grades K-12

SUMMARY

To prevent drownings, SB 1010 will authorize local drowning prevention organizations to partner with schools, informing parents where in their community they can access swim lessons. This bill also defines swim lessons as an essential public health service. Increasing a child’s awareness of water safety at a young age, as well as expanding access to swim lessons, are key prevention tools.

BACKGROUND

Since 1991, drowning has taken the lives of more than 12,500 Californians.¹ Drowning is the leading cause of death for California children aged 1-4 years, the second leading cause of death for children ages 5-14, and the third leading cause of death for California’s teens and youth.² Crucially, drowning disproportionately affect low-income families, with 79% of children in families with a household income less than \$50,000 having none to low swimming ability.⁶

Drowning is medically defined as the process of experiencing respiratory impairment from submersion or immersion in liquid, leading to hypoxia, or, lack of oxygen to the brain. For children aged 1-4 years old, most incidents of drowning occur in residential pools. Teens and youth, however, are more likely to drown in open bodies of water (i.e., lakes, rivers, oceans, etc.). Drowning can be fatal or non-fatal, but still lead to serious brain injury.

For every child who dies from drowning, another ten receive emergency care for non-fatal drowning.³ Non-fatal drowning can result in long-term health problems and costly hospital stays. More than 28% of drownings treated in emergency departments require hospitalization or transfer for further care, compared with 8% for all unintentional injuries.⁴

Brain injuries caused by non-fatal drowning can cause irreversible brain damage and other serious outcomes, which can lead to lifelong learning deficiencies and other physical impairments. Improving water safety knowledge and teaching swim skills are a key way to reduce drowning. Studies show that individuals with these skills are nearly 88% less likely to suffer a drowning incident.⁵

THE PROBLEM

Current law does not “authorize” or provide uniform authority for schools to partner with local, state, and national drowning prevention or children’s safety organizations to provide parents/caregivers with information on water safety and where to access swim lessons.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, CDPH issued a public health order, designating swimming lessons as an essential public health service. There is a need to codify this public health order should there be another pandemic.

THE SOLUTION

SB 1010 will authorize schools to work with designated drowning prevention organizations to provide drowning prevention education to parents and families at no cost to the school. It also requires the organization to provide the parent with information on accessing local swim lessons for their children. This bill will also codify the 2020 declaration by the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Department of Public Health that, due to the positive impact swim skills have on reducing drowning by 88%, swimming lessons for all ages of children are deemed “essential public health services”.

¹ [CA Water Safety Coalition](#)

² [Department of Developmental Services](#)

³ [CDC | Drowning Facts](#)

⁴ [CDC | Drowning Facts](#)

⁵ [“Association Between Swimming Lessons and Drowning in Childhood”](#)

⁶ [USA Swimming Foundation](#)

SUPPORT

California Coalition for Children's Safety and Health (Co-sponsor)
Drowning Prevention Foundation (Co-sponsor)
Safe Kids Greater Sacramento
Children's Advocacy Institute, University San Diego School of Law
CA Pool and Spa Association
Personal Insurance Federal of California
Association of CA Life Health Insurance Companies

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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