

California

AB 1575 (Irwin)

Katie Meyer's Law

CONFIDENTIAL ADVOCATES IN EDUCATION



SUMMARY

AB 1575 will provide students with an important option to select an outside adviser to participate alongside the student during administration-initiated disciplinary actions when there is an alleged violation of the student code of conduct. It will also require public universities and community colleges to provide selected advisers training on the institution's adjudication procedures.

BACKGROUND

While higher education campuses have announced commitments to student mental health, too few have taken action to provide low-barrier access to supportive services and advocates. Often mental health resources are not offered, or even available to students, when stressful and adversarial actions are initiated by campus administrations.

The Meyer Family created "Katie's Save" in memory of their daughter, Katie, a Stanford student-athlete, to advocate for common-sense solutions that address the distressing number of high achieving student athletes who have died by suicide in recent years. (www.katiessave.org).

Their advocacy has focused on ensuring that students have greater access to advocates and mental health resources - especially in challenging times when a student might be experiencing suicidal thoughts or behaviors.

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WHY IT IS NEEDED

While current law acknowledges the existence of confidential advocates in the Title IX context, as well as in student safety policies, it does not provide same for students facing disciplinary action. AB1575 allows for an outside advisor to help navigate adversarial actions initiated by campus administrations.

Without a statutory mandate, confidential advocates may not be authorized to provide assistance to the full range of adversarial proceedings a student may face, nor provide assistance to respondent students facing serious accusations or consequences - and which left unsupported, can spiral into tragedy.

Existing law also does not require campuses to train advisors selected by students on disciplinary procedures, or to honor their selection of a particular individual. This leaves the majority of students, who do not have the means to retain formal legal representation, without trusted assistance and support during these stressful proceedings.

