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

Dear Assemblymember Levine:

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 2539, legislation addressing the problem of coerced starvation and eating disorders in the fashion industry and aims to protect the health and wellbeing of professional models in California.

While modeling appears to be a glamorous profession, eating disorders in the modeling industry are a serious problem. Models, who are often minors, are frequently pressured to lose weight and can face dismissal from jobs if they are unable to do so. When misclassified as independent contractors, which happens far too often, models lack that support, protection and access to healthcare that they would be entitled to if classified appropriately as employees of the brands they represent. As a result, many models have suffered from the serious and sometimes fatal effects of anorexia and related health problems, as well as economic and sexual exploitation, 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. AB 2539 will not only take a much needed step toward protecting the health and well-being of models, addressing economic and sexual exploitation in the fashion industry, and appropriately classifying models as employees, but also will change the messages girls and young women receive about what our society values. For these reasons, we strongly support AB 2539 and congratulate you on the introduction of this groundbreaking legislation in California.

Sincerely,

S. Bryn Austin, ScD
Director, Strategic Training Initiative for the Prevention of Eating Disorders