To the Members of the California State Assembly:

I am returning Assembly Bill 2124 without my signature.

This bill would establish a high school Pupil Peer Support Training Program, developed and administered by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, before January 1, 2024, contingent on funding in a future state budget.

Peer support programs are valuable, which is why the 2022 Budget Act funded a substantially similar program. AB 178 allocated $10 million for the School-Based Peer Mental Health Demonstration project. This grant program will provide competitive grants to high schools to develop peer-to-peer support programs.

With our state facing lower-than-expected revenues over the first few months of this fiscal year, it is important to remain disciplined when it comes to spending, particularly spending that is ongoing. We must prioritize existing obligations and priorities, including education, health care, public safety and safety-net programs.

The Legislature sent measures with potential costs of well over $20 billion in one-time spending commitments and more than $10 billion in ongoing commitments not accounted for in the state budget. Bills that create significant General Fund cost pressure, such as this measure, should be considered in the annual budget process. For these reasons, I cannot sign this bill.
Sincerely,

Gavin Newcomb