

Pennsylvania Chapter

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



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The Pennsylvania Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics is incorporated in the state of Pennsylvania.

Honorable Tom Wolf, Governor
Via Fax: 717-772-8284

Honorable Rachel Levine, MD, FAAP, Secretary of Health

Via email: ralevine@pa.gov

Dear Governor Wolf and Secretary Levine:

Thank you for the wonderful approach you have taken to highlight the importance of immunization issues to the media during this pandemic. We are all aware of the drop in immunization rates among all ages, including Pennsylvania's children, and the dangers this presents. We surely agree that we do not want to have an outbreak of infectious diseases such as measles or other vaccine-preventable diseases in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. We all agree that we need to increase immunization rates.

While we totally support the importance of facilitating children's return to school this fall, we are concerned about the *Temporary Regulatory Suspension of Requirements for Children's Immunizations*.

Due to COVID-19, pediatricians and other health care providers have seen dramatic drops in patient visits and are now continuing to ramp up for well-care visits. We have joined with the national American Academy of Pediatrics in promoting our #CallYourPediatrician campaign to return children back to their medical homes. While visit rates are picking up, we are still hearing from our members that pediatricians remain underutilized. We worry that this temporary suspension will cause further delays in immunization rates when in fact, our pediatricians are ready and able to provide the catch-up immunizations and begin immunizing for the upcoming influenza season. Additionally, we worry that this message to delay vaccinations will allow those proponents lobbying for customized vaccination schedules or against vaccinations entirely will feel empowered and see this as a victory to their cause.

We would like to see Pennsylvania be a leader in the all-out effort to bring children up to date in their immunizations, ideally in their medical home. We need to work together to solve this problem and not put our children at risk of vaccine-preventable diseases while promoting such a critical need to have children return to school.

The PA AAP always stands ready to provide support and guidance on these critical issues affecting the health and well-being of Pennsylvania's children.

Sincerely,

Trude Haecker, MD, FAAP
President

CC: Annette Myarick, Executive Director
John Nikoloff, Partner, ERG-Partners