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March 22, 2017

The Honorable Ricardo Lara  
State Capitol, Room 5050  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
Fax: (916) 651-4933

SB 29 (Lara): Dignity Not Detention AAP-CA Position: SUPPORT

Dear Senator Lara:

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA), representing the 5,000 board-certified pediatrician members of all four California AAP regional chapters statewide, strongly supports your proposed legislation SB 29 (Lara). This bill would prohibit private, for-profit companies from operating immigration detention facilities in California and would require all detention facilities to uphold the Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) 2011 Operations Performance-Based National Detention Standards to ensure detainees' essential health and rights are protected.

The American Academy of Pediatrics' March 2017 policy statement, "Detention of Immigrant Children," holds that we must eliminate "exposure to conditions or settings that may retraumatize children, such as those that currently exist in detention, or detention itself." An end to the immigration detention of children would be ideal; short of that goal, we must make sure that detention facilities provide humane conditions to children and their families. However, as noted in the above policy statement, multiple reliable sources have reported "egregious conditions in many [immigration detention] centers, including lack of bedding (eg, sleeping on cement floors), open toilets, no bathing facilities, constant light exposure, confiscation of belongings, insufficient food and water, and lack of access to legal counsel, and ... extremely cold temperatures. At times children and families are kept longer than 72 hours, denied access to medical care and medications, separated from one another, or physically and emotionally maltreated." It is entirely unacceptable that any children or families are subjected to these cruel and inhumane conditions.

SB 29 (Lara) would help to improve conditions in California detention facilities in the face of a promised wave of deportations and detentions by codifying ICE's 2011 Detention Standards into law, while also prohibiting the operation of for-profit migration detention facilities, which operate under a perverse profit incentive to increase the number of immigration detainees. This would reduce the number of children and families detained under inhumane conditions.

California pediatricians strongly support SB 29 (Lara). We thank you for your public service and leadership on behalf of the health and well-being of children, youth, and families in California.

Sincerely,



Susan Wu, M.D., Fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics  
State Government Affairs Committee, American Academy of Pediatrics, California

CC: Kris Calvin, CEO; AAP-CA Leadership; Lydia Bourne