

April 2, 2019

Assembly Member Eloise Gómez Reyes  
Chair, Committee on Human Services  
1020 N Street, Room 124  
Sacramento, California 95814

**RE: AB 1324 (Levine): Foster children: immigration counsel.  
AAP-CA Position: Support**

Dear Assembly Member Reyes:

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA) representing the over 5,000 board-certified pediatrician members of California AAP Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4 statewide, strongly supports proposed legislation AB 1324 (Levine), which would require the State Department of Social Services to contract with nonprofit legal service organizations to provide legal services to undocumented children in foster care, if funding is available.

The American Academy of Pediatrics advocates for the health and well-being of all children. No child should have to face any legal proceedings alone, much less proceedings which might jeopardize their safety by compromising their ability to remain in this country. As noted in the AAP Policy Statement *Detention of Immigrant Children* “children without counsel are far more likely to be deported, regardless of the merits of their case or the dangers to which they would return.”

While California already requires that unaccompanied, undocumented minors who are transferred to the care and custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement be provided with legal services, subject to the availability of funding, this protection does not extend to undocumented children who are transferred to California’s foster care system.

AB 1324 would help to protect the health and well-being of some of our state’s most vulnerable children by extending free legal services to undocumented children in the foster care system, thereby assuring that these children do not have to represent themselves in judicial proceedings that could determine the path of their lives.

Pediatricians across the state of California urge an AYE vote on AB 1324 (Levine).  
youth, and families of California.

Sincerely,



Jean Junior, MD  
State Government Affairs, American Academy of Pediatrics, CA  
American Academy of Pediatrics, California