

April 2, 2019

Assembly Member Marc Levine
Capital Office, Room 5135
Sacramento, California 94249

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

Dear Assembly Member Levine:

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 your proposed legislation AB 1324, 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 strongly support your proposed legislation AB 1324. Thank you for your public service and leadership on behalf of the health and well-being of the children, youth, and families of California.

Sincerely,



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