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February 24, 2021

The Honorable Miguel Santiago
State Capitol
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0053

RE: AB 221 (Santiago) Emergency Food Assistance
AAP-CA Position: SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Santiago,

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA) representing over 3,000 pediatrician members strongly supports AB 221 as introduced on January 11, 2021, which would provide emergency food assistance to low-income Californians struggling financially due to COVID-19, regardless of immigration status.

Food insecurity - the limited or uncertain access to enough food - is a critical child health issue that impacts children and families in all communities. Children who live in households that are food insecure, even at the least severe levels of food insecurity, are likely to be sick more often, recover from illness more slowly, and be hospitalized more frequently. The evidence is overwhelming that food insecurity has significant impacts on the health and well-being of children and that those impacts can be life-long.

According to the California Association of Food Banks, 1 in 4 Californians currently struggle with hunger and food insecurity. Hispanic/Latino and Black families experience disproportionate rates of hunger. A study from Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health shows that, since the arrival of the Covid-19 virus in America, the rate of children facing food insecurity has doubled nationwide. Again, children of color are the most affected.

AB 221 would provide food to families most in need. It would also mandate a study to provide recommendations for a permanent food assistance program for all low-income California residents experiencing food insecurity, regardless of their immigration status. The American Academy of Pediatrics, California sees this as an important step towards improving the health of children in the state.

AAP-CA strongly supports AB 221. Thank you for your public service and leadership on behalf of the health and wellbeing of children, youth, and families in California.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Angela Dangvu" followed by a stylized flourish.

Angela Dangvu, M.D. FAAP
Member, State Government Affairs Committee
American Academy of Pediatrics, California

cc: AAP Leadership