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February 24, 2021

The Honorable Jim Patterson
State Capitol Suite 3132
Sacramento, CA 94249

RE: AB 262 (Patterson): Human trafficking: vacatur relief for victims: fines
AAP-CA Position: SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Patterson,

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA) representing over 3,000 pediatrician members strongly supports AB 262 as introduced on January 15, 2021, which would excuse human trafficking victims from paying fines for non-violent crimes they committed while they were a trafficking victim.

Victims of sex trafficking are often prosecuted and convicted of crimes including prostitution and other related criminal activity, not taking into account that they were coerced into committing illegal activities. Having a criminal charge on one's record makes it more difficult to get employment, housing, and an education. The problems are even greater for non-citizens who could be denied return entry into the United States based on their criminal record.

According to worldpopulationreview.com, California has the highest number of reported cases of trafficking (1,507 in 2019). The U.S. Department of Justice reports that many trafficking victims are minors, and many may not be recognized as victims, and are arrested and jailed instead of given needed services.

Vacatur Laws recognize that trafficking victims are not responsible for the criminal activity in which they have been forced to engage. They permit courts to vacate - legally rendering null and void - convictions for prostitution-related offenses and other nonviolent crimes and give trafficking victims a chance to rebuild their lives and thrive. Currently eighteen states have enacted full Vacatur Laws.

AAP-CA strongly supports AB 262. 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, appearing to read "N. Pfaff".

Nora Pfaff, M.D. FAAP
Member, State Government Affairs Committee
American Academy of Pediatrics, California

cc: AAP Leadership