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March 18, 2021

The Honorable Rob Bonta
State Capitol
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249 0018

RE: AB 263 (Bonta) Private Detention Facilities
AAP-CA Position: SUPPORT

Dear Assemblymember Bonta,

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA) representing over 3,000 pediatrician members strongly supports AB 263 as amended on March 17, 2021, which would establish the Health Oversight and Leadership in Detention Act (HOLD Act), ensuring that private detention facilities comply with local and state public health orders and regulations.

California is home to five privately operated civil detention facilities that have the capacity to hold more than 5,600 individuals at any given time, with plans to expand to as many as 7,200. There is also one private prison still in operation with a contract with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). These facilities are required to comply with “current and future plans implemented by federal, state or local authorities addressing specific public health issues including communicable disease reporting requirements.” According to a report from the Immigrant Defense Advocates, however, private detention operators have failed to meet these standards in some cases and have refused to comply with requests by local public health departments in others.¹

The Adelanto ICE Detention Center and the Otay Mesa Detention Center both saw large outbreaks of COVID-19 during 2020, endangering employees as well as those who are incarcerated while raising concerns about whether health orders are being followed inside for-profit, private detention facilities. The HOLD Act will make it clear that the facilities must comply with state and county health departments and with Cal/OSHA standards.

AB 263 would ensure the statewide coordination that will be needed to secure our state during the COVID-19 pandemic and any future public health crises. AAP-CA strongly supports AB 263. 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 "Sharon Pham".

Sharon Pham, M.D. FAAP
Member, State Government Affairs Committee
American Academy of Pediatrics, California

cc: AAP Leadership

¹ <https://imadvocates.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Immigration-Detention-and-Public-Health-Brief-.pdf>