



Put Children First: Priorities for the 118th Congress

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) urges Congress to put children first in policy and fiscal decisions. Pediatricians look forward to partnering with policymakers in the 118th Congress on the following priorities:

Access to Health Care

- More than half of all U.S. children rely on Medicaid and CHIP for essential health care coverage including mental health care.
- Congress should work to ensure that all eligible children and families are enrolled in Medicaid and CHIP and that barriers to enrolling are eliminated.

Vaccines

- Routine childhood immunization rates are declining, threatening children's health.
- Congress should support programs and policies to improve these rates, including strengthening the Vaccines for Children program, which provides federally purchased vaccines to roughly 50% of U.S. children.

Newborn Screening

- Newborn screening aims to identify infants who may look healthy but who have a rare health condition that if untreated may cause serious harm or may even be life-threatening. Simple tests can uncover health issues that should be treated as soon as possible to give children the best chance for healthy growth and development.
- Congress should advance legislation that reauthorizes and increases spending for newborn screening programs at CDC, HRSA, and NIH.

Donor Human Milk

- Human milk provides health benefits for all newborns, but is of particular importance for high-risk infants, especially those born with very low birth weight.
- Donor milk banks represent a safe and effective approach to obtaining, pasteurizing, and dispensing human milk for use in NICUs and other settings. However, accessibility to donor milk in the U.S. continues to be substantially limited in terms of supply, cost, and distribution.
- AAP supports the *Access to Donor Milk Act* which aims to expand access to and awareness of donor human milk and to clarify the regulatory status of donor milk.

Mental Health

- While important steps have been taken to address the youth mental health crisis, Congress's work is not done.
- Congress can address the troubling trends in youth suicide and suicide attempts, depression, and anxiety by advancing legislation that invests in the full continuum of mental and behavioral health care for children and in the mental and behavioral health workforce.

Paid Leave

- Families' access to comprehensive paid family and medical leave improves child health and wellbeing.
- AAP supports bipartisan progress on meaningfully expanding access to comprehensive paid leave.

Pediatric Subspecialty Loan Repayment

- The United States' supply of pediatric subspecialists is inadequate to meet children's health needs.
- Congress should provide increased funding for the Pediatric Subspecialty Loan Repayment Program to improve access to care for children with special health care needs by offering loan repayment to providers who agree to serve in an underserved area.

Put children first.

Investing in children is imperative for the nation's long-term economic success. Many adult diseases have their origins in childhood.

Strong financial investments in children's health care, research, and prevention programs will help keep our children healthy, provide the foundation for adult health, and lower overall health care costs.

For more information, contact the AAP Washington Office at kids1st@aap.org.