March XX, 2020

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education & Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education & Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education & Related Agencies
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education & Related Agencies
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Blunt, Chairwoman DeLauro, Ranking Member Murray, and Ranking Member Cole:

As organizations that care deeply about the health and well-being of our nation’s children, we write to request that you provide $20,000,000 in funding for the Pediatric Disaster Care Pilot Program under the National Disaster Medical System within the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 Labor, HHS, Education (LHHS) appropriations bill.

Children account for 25% of the US population and have unique medical care needs when a disaster arises. Pediatric care requires specialized training, equipment, supplies, and pharmaceuticals that may not be readily available in an emergency. Given the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency, a severe flu season, and the increasing number of natural disasters, this is especially important. When disaster strikes, minimizing the impacts of children’s exposure to infectious diseases, trauma, and other hazards is a challenge for healthcare facilities and often gets overlooked when prior training has not been completed. In fact, this is exactly what the healthcare system is experiencing with COVID-19 while grappling with an especially deadly flu season for children. The majority of Americans believe children should be given a higher priority in disaster planning and response, however, federal funding for public health preparedness and biodefense has not reflected this priority.

The Pediatric Disaster Care Pilot Program, created in 2019, currently funds two Pediatric Disaster Care Centers of Excellence (CoEs)—one led by the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) Benioff Children’s Hospitals and the other by University Hospitals Rainbow Babies and Children’s Hospitals. The two CoEs funded under this pilot program are addressing appropriate planning and response capabilities that support the specific needs of children during public health emergencies and disasters, such as mass casualty events. The CoEs are developing coordinated pediatric care plans in their region, improving statewide medical surge capacity for pediatric care, educating and training the healthcare and medical workforce on preparedness and response gaps related to pediatric patients, and conducting a regional exercise.

With this pilot, known gaps in pediatric disaster care will be examined and existing clinical capabilities within states and across multi-state regions will be increased. Specifically, the pilots are focused on
managing pediatric care related to trauma, infectious diseases, burns, and chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) incidents. Funding in FY21 is critical to enhancing regional capacity to provide critical care and surgical care for sick or injured children within the existing two regional sites as well as in other regions of the U.S.

Thank you for your consideration. We urge you to provide $20 million in funding under the National Disaster Medical System within ASPR for this important program and look forward to working with you to improve disaster preparedness for children across our nation.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics