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May 19, 2022

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

On behalf of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), a non-profit professional organization of 67,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical sub-specialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults, we write to urge your Administration to do everything in its power to quickly increase the supply of safe infant formula in the United States. Families across the country are struggling to access formula—an essential source of nutrition for many infants—and are worried about how they will feed their children.

At some point during their first year, most US infants receive infant formula, and for many infants, most of their nutrition in the first year of life comes from infant formula. For the youngest children, infant formula is often the only source of nutrition. While AAP recommends exclusive breastfeeding for about 6 months, followed by continued breastfeeding as complementary foods are introduced, not all infants are partially or exclusively breastfed for the first 6 months. For those infants, the AAP recommends use of an iron-fortified infant formula as the best and safest alternative for the first year of life.

Since Abbott Nutrition announced a voluntary recall in February, families across the country have encountered reduced availability of infant formula products. The shortages have been especially acute for children with allergies, digestive issues, or metabolic disorders who require specialty formulas that were produced in Abbott's Sturgis, MI facility. While we appreciate the recent steps announced by your administration to increase formula supply, more must be done to reassure families and provide solutions for feeding their babies especially those younger than 6 months of age. This is particularly important for low-income families who rely on the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, or WIC, program to obtain infant formula. The variability in approaches taken by states with respect to the WIC program requires urgent federal attention.

Pediatricians across the country are providing guidance to families, caring for children who are now hospitalized due to lack of needed formula products, and doing our best to connect our patients with needed formula, but we need help. Without more formula supply, our options for where to direct families are severely limited. Families need clear, consistent, and calming guidance about what they should do if they are unable to find the infant formula products that they need as well as when to expect formula supply to increase.

As experts in infant nutrition, we are willing to work with you to develop these messages or other guidance that may be of help. Families deserve a clear timeline of when to expect formula supply to return to baseline levels as well as information about how scarce supplies can be prioritized to those in dire need. We are calling on your Administration to use every tool at its disposal to remedy this situation as quickly as possible and to provide clear communications to families.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent issue and know that we stand ready to work with you to ensure that families have access to the infant formula that they desperately need. If we can be of further assistance, please contact Tamar Magarik Haro at tharo@aap.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Moira Szilagyi".

Moira A. Szilagyi, MD, PhD, FAAP
President

MAS/mrc