



## Washington Report, News Articles, Advocacy, Immigration

### **AAP pushes for appropriate medical care for immigrant children**

by Devin Miller, Washington Correspondent

In the hours, days and weeks following the deaths of two immigrant children in U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) custody, the Academy served as the leading child health expert. It called for improved conditions and adequate medical care that could have saved the lives of 7-year-old Jakelin Caal Maquin and 8-year-old Felipe Alonzo Gomez and sought answers from federal government officials.

The Academy maintains that children should not be subjected to CBP processing centers because conditions are inconsistent with AAP recommendations for appropriate care and treatment of children. Additionally, separation of families or detention of children with their parents is not a solution for the poor conditions in CBP custody.

The deaths of Jakelin and Felipe spurred a national dialogue about the medical care of immigrant children in CBP custody. Pediatricians reiterated that children have unique vulnerabilities that may be easily overlooked by medical professionals without pediatric expertise.

"When it comes to the medical care of children, if you're not trained in pediatric care, you don't know what you don't know," AAP Immediate Past President Colleen A. Kraft, M.D., M.B.A., FAAP, told "PBS Newshour."

The Academy is urging CBP to ensure all children receive the medical care they need from professionals trained in pediatric care. In the days following Felipe's death, Dr. Kraft spoke to CBP Commissioner Kevin McAleenan, sharing this message, asking questions and offering the Academy's expertise.

The Academy repeatedly has called on the federal government to appoint an independent group of medical experts with full access to these facilities to ensure optimal care for children.

"As pediatricians, we know that children are not small adults," said Julie M. Linton, M.D., FAAP, co-chair of the AAP Immigrant Health Special Interest Group, in an interview with "PRI's The World." "They present with subtle findings, and they tend to get sick more quickly because their bodies are smaller and they have less reserve."

Instead of subjecting children to facilities that are inappropriate for them, the AAP recommends alternatives such as community-based case management.

Conversations with CBP are ongoing as the AAP continues to offer its assistance and learn more about the processes in place to provide medical treatment to immigrant children.

### **House bill seeks universal background checks for firearms**

During their first full week in session, members of the U.S. House of Representatives introduced bipartisan legislation to require universal background checks for the purchase of firearms, a long-standing advocacy priority for the Academy to protect children from gun violence.

In a press statement following the bill's introduction, AAP President Kyle Yasuda, M.D., FAAP, said it is "an important, long overdue step forward to protect children from gun violence and should serve as a starting point for more needed progress."

The bill, the Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2019 (H.R. 8), would require background checks on all firearm sales and most firearm transfers. The original co-sponsors include House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and Reps. Mike Thompson (D-Calif.), Peter King (R-N.Y.), Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.), Brian Fitzpatrick (R-Pa.), Sheila Jackson Lee (D-Texas), Brian Mast (R-Fla.), Robin Kelly (D-Ill.), Fred Upton (R-Mich.), Lucy McBath



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(D-Ga.) and Christopher Smith (R-N.J.).

The Academy is urging lawmakers to advance this legislation without delay and will reach out to members with advocacy opportunities as the bill advances through Congress.

In addition to the progress on background checks, the AAP is continuing to call for other common-sense, comprehensive policies to keep children safe, such as \$50 million in federal funding to support gun violence prevention research.

"As we begin a new year with a newly elected Congress, the AAP looks forward to working with both chambers to advance this legislation without delay, and to continue to work across the aisle on policies that help ensure all children are safe from gun violence where they live, learn and play," Dr. Yasuda said.

### Attend the 2019 AAP Legislative Conference

Registration for the 2019 AAP Legislative Conference is open. The conference will take place April 7-9 in Washington, D.C.

The annual conference brings together pediatricians and pediatric trainees from across the country who share a passion for child health advocacy. Participants attend skills-building workshops, hear from guest speakers, learn about policy priorities impacting children and pediatricians, and go to Capitol Hill to urge Congress to support strong child health policies.

The conference will feature a Pediatric Subspecialty Advocacy Track with specific legislative and skills-building workshops focused on the interests and needs of pediatric medical subspecialists and surgical specialists.

For more information and to register, visit [aap.org/legcon](http://aap.org/legcon).

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