

# American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™



## Minnesota Chapter

*We are Minnesota's pediatricians. And we are committed to protecting and advancing the health of every child and adolescent in Minnesota.*

## 2018 MNAAP Legislative Priorities

### Reduce Vaccine-Preventable Disease

#### **SF 143/HF 96 (Sen. Eaton/Rep. Freiberg)**

Misinformation about vaccines is all too common, leading many parents to opt out of critical, life-saving immunizations, otherwise mandated for school and daycare attendance. This puts children – particularly those with most vulnerability to these diseases – at great risk. Parents deserve medically-accurate information about vaccines and their benefits and risks. This legislation would ensure parents have a conversation with a physician before opting out of required vaccines.

### Improve Pediatric Mental Health care Access

#### **SF 2028/HF 1974 (Sen. Utke/Rep. Albright)**

Access to mental health treatment must be as readily available as care for medical/surgical services. Under these bills, the Minnesota Department of Health and the Minnesota Department of Commerce would be tasked with ensuring that health plans implement mental health parity.

#### **SF 2659/HF 3223 (Sen. Clausen/Rep. Baker)**

Access to mental health resources is woefully inadequate in meeting the needs of Minnesota's children, adolescents, and their families. Under this proposal authored, the University of Minnesota would receive \$540,000 to develop a clinical mental health training program for pediatric residents. Importantly, this funding would support efforts to provide rotations in psychiatry for pediatric residents. Pediatricians are routinely the first place families struggling with mental illness in children turn, and this funding would help give those pediatricians the training and education they need to serve these families. The bill emphasizes a multidisciplinary approach to mental health delivery, and would support resident education on conducting comprehensive clinical mental health assessments.

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# MNAAP Principles for Healthy Kids and Families

As the voice of more than 1,000 pediatricians in the state, MNAAP urges legislators to consider some key perspectives from those of us who care for babies, children, adolescents, and young adults every day. Let these be a guide as you consider the impact of a bill:

## **Improve health care access and affordability.**

MNAAP supports legislation that ensures all of Minnesota's children and teens, including the most vulnerable, immigrants and refugees, have equal access to medical care and resources. Components of quality health insurance include affordability for families, portability, continuous coverage, streamlined and simplified administrative aspects, choice of clinician(s), and coordination with existing maternal and child health programs.

Access to high quality health care for children must be affordable and available for all families. In order for health care to be accessible, it must be affordable. MNAAP supports efforts that improve affordability of quality health insurance, co-pays and prescription drugs. Patients also deserve protection when they pick up their prescriptions, too, and should be able to trust that the drugs are priced at the market value, not a price artificially inflated by outside actors.

## **Address health inequities among children.**

Although Minnesota is consistently ranked as one of the healthiest states in the nation, we have among the most severe racial and economic health disparities of all states. For example, about 13% of American Indian children do not have health insurance in Minnesota compared to just 2% of whites. We do some world class health care here in Minnesota, but the yawning health disparities need our attention now. We can do better.

## **Invest in prenatal and early childhood initiatives.**

Ninety percent of brain development occurs before age five. There is abundant evidence that a child's first years of life establish the fundamental elements of lifelong experiences impact the entirety of a child's life in countless ways. Support for programs that invigorate and nourish a child's earliest years is critical and a wise investment in productive, health adults.

## **Supporting public health policies has tremendous benefits for children.**

From promoting physical activity for kids to taking action to reduce the harms of opioids to passing common sense firearm safety laws, we can help Minnesotans lead healthier, safer lives.