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March 10, 2016

The Honorable Harry Reid
522 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Reid:

On behalf of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), a non-profit professional organization of 64,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical subspecialists, I write to offer our support for the *Fair Day in Court for Kids Act of 2016* (S. 2540), legislation that provides unaccompanied children with access to counsel throughout their immigration proceedings.

The mission of the AAP is to protect the health and well-being of *all* children; we believe that children are our most enduring and vulnerable legacy. No child should have to represent himself or herself in an immigration proceeding¹, and the *Fair Day in Court for Kids Act* will help ensure that the government appoints counsel to unaccompanied children and other vulnerable individuals, such as those who are victims of abuse, torture or violence. The legislation also requires the Department of Homeland Security to make legal orientation programs available at all detention centers, so families know their rights and responsibilities under immigration law.

The health, well-being, and safety of children should be prioritized in all immigration proceedings. We are aware that it is not uncommon for a child as young as four years of age or younger to represent him- or herself in front of a judge without counsel. This is immoral. Given the percentage of children who are granted lawful status when they have legal representation based on the merits of their case, more must be done to ensure all children have appropriate access to counsel.

The AAP appreciates your commitment to immigrant children and is pleased to support S. 2540. We look forward to continuing to work with you to improve the well-being of all our nation's children. If you have any questions feel free to contact Tamar Magarik Haro in our Washington, DC office at tharo@aap.org or 202-347-8600.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Benard P. Dreyer".

Benard P. Dreyer, MD, FAAP
President

BPD/mrc

¹ AAP Council on Community Pediatrics. Policy Statement: Providing Care for Immigrant, Migrant, and Border Children. *Pediatrics*, 2013, 131(6): e2028-34.