Position Statement on SJR 113
March 22, 2018

The Alabama Chapter-American Academy of Pediatrics and the Alabama Academy of Family Physicians are gravely concerned about SJR 113, which urges school-based vaccinations in Alabama. While we remain committed to increasing vaccine rates in Alabama for the very reasons outlined in the “Whereases” of the resolution, we are very concerned about the potential disruption that a widespread school-based program could bring to local practices and the likelihood of detrimental effects of adolescents not visiting the doctor—their medical home—during the critical teen years.

Visits to the medical home are critical to the health and well-being of our adolescent patients. For this group, we have evidenced-based clinical and anticipatory guidelines that mandate regular screenings for sexually transmitted infections, depression, and substance use issues, among others. However, it is very difficult to encourage adolescents to visit our clinics as other required services, such as pre-participation physicals for sports, are available outside of the medical home. Requirements such as adolescent immunizations serve as a convenient impetus for these appointments. In the absence of these visits, important screens could be missed.

As pediatricians and family physicians, we are committed to the health and well-being of every child in our state. Any school-based immunization program should be designed and implemented in conjunction with local providers through the existing Alabama Vaccine Advisory Committee to better coordinate communication between the students, their caregivers, and the medical home. We will be working with ADPH on developing a model by which students are directed to their established medical home for immunizations, check-ups, and physicals.

For these reasons, we feel that this resolution is unnecessary and harmful and we oppose its passage.