2020 Legislative Priorities

We advocate for:
- **Improving child health through adequate Medicaid and CHIP funding and Medicaid expansion:** Protection of funding for Medicaid and CHIP coverage for children is a permanent priority of the Alabama Chapter-AAP. Children comprise only 25 percent of the Medicaid budget, yet 58 percent of Medicaid recipients. The Chapter advocates for sustainable and permanent revenue solutions to adequately fund both programs. In addition, the Chapter strongly supports expanded coverage for low-income Alabamians who don’t currently qualify for Medicaid, which would infuse much-needed federal funding to boost the state’s economy. Children whose parents have health care coverage have better health outcomes, and infant mortality rates have showed decline in expansion states compared to non-expansion states.

- **Increased vaccination rates among Alabama youth:** With only 20 percent of Alabama teens receiving all recommended vaccines, we support requirements to enter vaccinations into the state immunization registry in order to strengthen state-level data and urges removal of unnecessary exemptions.

- **Protection of the Medical Home and the practice of medicine:** With the pediatric medical home established as the best place for care of children of all ages, the Chapter opposes any legislative efforts that threatens the medical home and supports those that protect it. The Chapter also opposes any attempts to control the practice of medicine, interfere with the doctor-patient relationship, or dictate requirements that violate current AAP guidelines and recommendations for the care of children.

- **Adequate funding for birth to 5 services:** The Chapter endorses the Alabama School Readiness Alliance efforts to increase and protect funding for state-funded, voluntary, high-quality, pre-k programs, and advocates for adequate funding for early intervention services and early literacy services.

- **Medical marijuana:** The Chapter opposes the legalization of medical marijuana outside of the FDA approval process.

2020 Educational Priorities

- **Strengthening Alabama’s child passenger restraint law:** The Chapter advocates for amending the state child passenger safety restraint law to meet national standards using the latest evidence-based research.

- **Preventing arrests of mothers prescribed Medically Assisted Therapy for opioid addiction:** A 2016 Alabama law provides an affirmative defense for expectant mothers using physician-prescribed medications. Local interpretations of the Endangerment Act continue to vary, however, requiring full education of all parties and an increased awareness of successful recovery from opioid addiction.

- **Raising age of assault rifle purchase to 21:** Firearm-related injuries are the third leading cause of death among U.S. children one to 17 years of age, and 4.2% of children witnessed a shooting in 2017. Alabama is in the top five states in firearm-related death rates. The Chapter urges discussion to consider raising the age to purchase assault rifles to 21, mirroring that of handguns.

- **Later school start times for high school seniors:** Recent national evidence supports later school start times for high school seniors, which have been associated with decreased truancy, improved grades, and fewer car accidents in teenagers.

- **Preventing cardiovascular disease in youth:** The Chapter supports new laws to create a minimum age of 21 to purchase energy drinks in Alabama.