



January 31, 2017

Dr. Fernando Stein, President  
The American Academy of Pediatrics  
141 Northwest Point Boulevard  
Elk Grove Village, IL 60007-1098

Dear Dr. Stein,

The purpose of this letter is to express our alarm at The American Academy of Pediatrics' recent decision to reaffirm abortion a "right" of adolescents.<sup>1,2</sup>

The American Academy of Pediatrics says it is "dedicated to the health of all children," yet in rendering a decision such as this, the Academy profoundly harms the health of children twice: First, by ignoring the grave psychological, health, and safety risks<sup>3,4</sup> posed to the adolescent seeking the abortion; and second, by enshrining as a "right" the decision for one child to procure the death of their own child.

The AAP's Committee on Adolescence acknowledges that "Basic principles of law and society hold that parents should be involved in and responsible for ensuring that their children receive medical care, that parents ordinarily act in the best interests of their children, and that minors benefit from the advice and emotional support of their parents." And yet, they ultimately conclude, "The pregnant patient's right to decide who should be involved and what the outcome of the pregnancy will be should be respected." This places the unsteady will of a still-developing, individual teenager above the embrace of a caring, life-affirming community; in rejecting parental consent and notification laws, the AAP places ideology above

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<sup>1</sup> AAP COMMITTEE ON ADOLESCENCE. The Adolescent's Right to Confidential Care When Considering Abortion. *Pediatrics*. 2017;139(2):e20163861

<sup>2</sup> Pediatric News, McKnight, W. 2017  
[http://www.mdedge.com/pediatricnews/article/129811/adolescent-medicine/aap-teen-access-abortion-care-right?channel=176&utm\\_source=News\\_PED\\_eNL\\_013017&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=AAP:%20Teen%20access%20to%20abortion%20care%20is%20a%20right](http://www.mdedge.com/pediatricnews/article/129811/adolescent-medicine/aap-teen-access-abortion-care-right?channel=176&utm_source=News_PED_eNL_013017&utm_medium=email&utm_content=AAP:%20Teen%20access%20to%20abortion%20care%20is%20a%20right) (accessed January 30, 2017)

<sup>3</sup> J Daugirdaitė V, van den Akker O, Purewal S. Posttraumatic stress and posttraumatic stress disorder after termination of pregnancy and reproductive loss: a systematic review. *J Pregnancy*. 2015;2015:646345. doi: 10.1155/2015/646345. Epub 2015 Feb 5.

<sup>4</sup> Bellieni CV1, Buonocore G. Abortion and subsequent mental health: Review of the literature. *Psychiatry Clin Neurosci*. 2013 Jul;67(5):301-10. doi: 10.1111/pcn.12067.

common sense, and gives physicians an “out” in facilitating communication between parent and the vulnerable child.

Furthermore, the “data” cited by the AAP on pediatrician support for abortion in this statement is more than 2 decades old; a 2013 paper on obstetrician support is simply an ideological position paper signed by 100 advocates for abortion. On the contrary, a Gallup poll from July 2011 showed that 71% of Americans support parental consent laws,<sup>5</sup> the likes of which can now be found in 37 states. The Supreme Court of the United States has upheld such laws as constitutional, and has noted that even under *Roe v. Wade* the so-called “right” to an abortion is not absolute.

Today, countless post-abortion healing ministries located across the country assist women who suffer from Post-Abortion Syndrome, symptoms of which include: acute feeling of grief, depression, anger, fear of disclosure, preoccupation with babies or getting pregnant again, nightmares, sexual dysfunction, termination of relationships, emotional coldness, increased alcohol and drug abuse, eating disorders, anxiety, flashbacks of the abortion procedure, anniversary syndrome, repeat abortions, and suicide. While ideologues within the scientific community may deny these claims, the experience of physicians, mental health professionals, and those in the pro-life movement who care for women after abortion attest to a deeper, more profound, but often-ignored reality: *women and the unborn suffer immensely from abortion, both during and after the death of the child*. Denying parents the opportunity to intervene and protect their adolescents from these risks is a severe disservice to children.

While the AAP statement concludes that “Concern for incest or abuse should be raised when a minor, particularly a younger adolescent, resists parental involvement when seeking abortion services,” it undercuts the very safety net which children need by ultimately promoting an unfettered right to abortion, and provides no guidance as to what to do—or whom to involve—in those circumstances; in short, it jeopardizes the lives and safety of children who are victims of sex trafficking or abusive relationships, forced to have abortions to cover up evidence of sexual abuse.

Finally, parental notifications laws appear to have a positive impact on adolescent abortion rates. A 2009 literature review completed by the pro-abortion leaning Guttmacher Institute identified 17 academic studies that found that these laws lower abortion rates for minors.<sup>6</sup> We believe more research needs to be completed in this area.

Considering the above, we strongly request that The American Academy of Pediatrics rescind its declaration that abortion is a “right” of adolescents. The statement appears to be first and foremost that of a political agenda rather than medical science; we also strongly reject the incredulous claim that the

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<sup>5</sup> Gallup, Saad L, Common State Abortion Restrictions Spark Mixed Reviews. 2011 <http://www.gallup.com/poll/148631/common-state-abortion-restrictions-spark-mixed-reviews.aspx> (accessed January 31, 2017)

<sup>6</sup> Dennis A et al., *The Impact of Laws Requiring Parental Involvement for Abortion: A Literature Review*. New York: Guttmacher Institute, 2009.

statement's release was coincidental to the election of a pro-life President and Congress, and a "core value" of pediatricians.<sup>2</sup>

If The Academy's interest is in protecting the health of all children, then it will put abortion politics aside and focus on ways that we can help children avoid abortion's risks and of course, the senseless deaths of their unborn children.

Sincerely,

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