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February 5, 2009

Insurance and Real Estate Committee

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. I am Dr. Ronald Angoff, a practicing pediatrician and president of the Connecticut Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. I am writing today to offer the support of Connecticut pediatricians for **H.B. 5242: An Act Concerning Health Insurance Coverage for Required Vaccinations**, which will require insurance companies to pay for vaccinations mandated for school children.

This bill will accomplish a goal that is frequently talked about, but not often acted upon – that of ensuring that preventive care is readily available to all residents, particularly children. Preventive care for children is fundamental to the health and wellbeing of not only each child, but the entire community. Any barriers to access should be removed. The National American Academy of Pediatrics recommends a regimen of preventive care for children revolving mainly around an immunization schedule. Vaccinations prevent damaging childhood illnesses such as measles, mumps, diphtheria, and polio – one need go back only two generations to see the devastation caused by letting these diseases go unchecked in the community. Particularly given the rising debt of the government and the skyrocketing costs of healthcare, preventive care is key for sustaining a cost-effective healthcare system, as the treatment costs for any of these diseases far exceeds the cost of providing the necessary immunizations to prevent them.

Health insurance, as it stands now, is somewhat of a misnomer. The current structure of health insurance provides illness care rather than health maintenance. It is time to expand the focus to include preventive care, both as a way to reduce overall costs for patients and insurers, and to keep our children and our communities healthy. By guaranteeing that vaccinations are covered by insurance, high fees that will prohibit families from seeking the necessary preventive care for their children can be avoided, resulting in a healthier community and lower overall health costs. Please join the American Academy of Pediatrics in supporting this bill, **H.B. 5242**, to ensure that our children receive the care and services they need to live healthy, successful lives.

The American Academy of Pediatrics also requests your support of **S.B. 301: An Act Concerning Health Insurance Coverage for Autism Spectrum Disorders**. The cost of quality care for a person diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder is prohibitively high for many families. By providing insurance coverage for the necessary care, we will be paving the road for those with autism spectrum disorder to become successful, productive members of our community. We ask you to join us in our support of **S.B. 301**.

Thank you for your consideration.