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RESEARCH

October 11, 2016

Dear Academic Pediatricians:

In September, the Pediatric Policy Council (PPC)—a collaboration of the Academic Pediatric Association, the American Pediatric Society, the Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs, and the Society for Pediatric Research dedicated to promoting public policies to advance child health and well-being—developed four general questions related to child health to be sent to the campaigns of the two major party candidates for President of the United States, Donald J. Trump and Hillary Clinton, with the goal of better understanding where both candidates stand for children.

The questions submitted to the candidates addressed topics including investing in child health research, strengthening the pediatric subspecialty workforce, increasing funding for Medicaid, and expanding paid family leave for employed parents. In early October, the campaigns of both presidential candidates submitted their responses, which may be found attached.

These answers provide a glimpse into how the two candidates seeking the highest office in the land will handle some of the most important issues facing children's health care now and in the future, and we urge you to disseminate these questions and their responses widely to your colleagues and others so that they may vote for the strongest candidate possible for children.

In addition, given the close relationship that many of us have with our patients' families, we can also encourage them to be active participants in the democratic process. Informing and empowering voters to participate in local, state, and national elections will help to ensure that the nation has the leadership necessary to enact the strongest possible policies to improve our children's health.

If you have any questions regarding the PPC's process or the answers provided, please do not hesitate to contact Ethan Jorgensen-Earp at ejorgensen@aap.org or at (202) 347-8600. Thank you for all you do for children.

Sincerely,

Paul Chung, MD, MS
Chair, Pediatric Policy Council

Responses from 2016 U.S. Presidential Candidates

The Pediatric Policy Council posed a series of four identical questions to each of the candidates for President of the United States. Their unedited responses follow.

Donald J. Trump

Hillary Clinton

QUESTION 1

Most adult diseases have their origins in childhood and yet, less than 15% of the NIH budget is spent on pediatric research. How do you propose to ensure that future NIH funding priorities match the health care needs of all our country's population?

As President, I will responsibly balance our competing budget priorities. My administration will make our budget submissions based on what we agree will bring the greatest value added to the people of America. The National Institutes of Health's role is to pursue the research necessary to keep America as healthy as possible. We will work with Congress to ensure that budget priorities for health care and other domestic spending needs help strengthen our economy to find the necessary resources to meet our commitment to NIH in the future.

Disease afflicts Americans in all stages of life. Throughout my career, I have worked to make sure that all children have a fair shot at reaching their God-given potential by fighting for health care for children, including helping to create the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and supporting the parents, schools, and communities that help raise our children. CHIP, which provides coverage for more than 8 million children nationwide, embodies my steadfast belief that delivering world-class health care is a fundamental building block for building a healthier and stronger nation. And in turn, a fundamental building block of a world-class health care system is a commitment to robust scientific and medical research that makes a difference for Americans of all ages.

As First Lady and Senator and in this campaign, I have championed our National Institutes of Health and other agencies that help inspire and fund the crucial scientific research that ensures a healthier future for our children. And over these years, I have fought to prioritize the resources these agencies require to pursue scientific discovery and implementation of new treatments for diseases that affect the most vulnerable members of our society, including our children.

These efforts require a long-run vision of the promise and possibilities of the American health care system that addresses the needs of current as well as future generations. I will keep the future of our children squarely in focus as we continue to nurture and support the scientific discoveries crucial to their well-being.

Donald J. Trump

Hillary Clinton

QUESTION 2

Shortages of pediatric subspecialists and child mental health providers result in sick children waiting for weeks or even months to get an appointment. How do you plan to strengthen the pediatric subspecialty workforce to ensure that children receive the care and treatments they need in a timely manner?

Achieving these objectives will require a reduction in regulations, getting rid of the Affordable Care Act, creating a federal backstop for states to pursue tort reform, and working with the states to improve the mental health system. Mental health reform touches many areas beyond treatment for children. Such reform must address criminal justice challenges, veterans' issues, and training for our police and other first responders regarding mental health situations. Comprehensive mental health reforms will be a top health care priority in my administration.

I am the proud grandmother of two beautiful grandchildren. When I think about their future and the future of millions of children like them, I am reminded of the many challenges that we must overcome together as a nation to ensure their lives are filled with health and opportunity. Among these challenges is the need to provide children timely access to medical care when the health care workforce is not evenly distributed across our country. We need to make sure that children in every community across the country can get the health care services they need.

Building on the progress of the ACA, which gave tuition relief for newly trained physicians to serve in underserved areas, my administration will further seek to improve access to subspecialty care for the children of America — no matter where they live. I will work to encourage our doctors—pediatricians and pediatric specialists alike—to practice in underserved communities by tripling of the size of the National Health Service Corps. I will also work to double the funding for primary care services at community health centers over the next decade.

The mental health of our children is a particularly important issue for me. Two-thirds of children with mental health problems receive no treatment at all, and children in high-risk groups—such as those in juvenile justice settings, in the child-welfare system, or whose mothers experienced depression during or after pregnancy—are particularly underserved. The consequences of delayed and inadequate treatment for children and young adults with mental health problems play out over decades. That's why I am committed to expanding early diagnosis and treatment of mental health conditions, and preventing them when possible. For example, I plan to scale up efforts and increase funding to help pediatric practices and schools support children with mental health problems, including increased access to child psychiatrists and other behavioral specialists for early screening and intervention.

Donald J. Trump

Hillary Clinton

QUESTION 3

Medicaid provides healthcare coverage for millions of Americans, nearly half of whom are children. Medicaid health care payments are significantly less than Medicare payments for the same services and are often less than the actual care costs. How do you plan to remedy this inequity to ensure that federal health care programs value children as much as adults?

As mentioned above, there are a host of issues that need to be addressed to relieve pressure on Medicaid. First, we will ask Congress to block grant Medicaid funding to the states. The states are far better equipped to manage Medicaid to meet the specific needs of their citizens than the federal government. Second, through immigration reform, we can reduce the number of individuals burdening Medicaid dollars. Third, our tax reforms will grow our economy, further reducing the number of people in need of Medicaid coverage. Our trade reforms will strengthen our economy even further. The best social program is a job, and by bringing millions of jobs back to the United States we can improve the lives and the health care for all our citizens.

I am grateful to Medicaid and CHIP for providing children, their families, and other underserved individuals the chance to attain the basic health care they deserve. Yet despite its successes, the Medicaid program faces challenges and can be improved. As First Lady and Senator, I have worked diligently to ensure that federal and state agencies work effectively to promote the health and well-being of Medicaid enrollees. As president, I will continue this effort by working with the governors in 19 states who, due to their refusal to expand Medicaid, have left 3 million Americans without coverage. Access to care should not depend on your zip code.

Fundamental to my vision for our health care system is the core belief that children's lives deserve the utmost value and respect. So in addition to working toward Medicaid expansion in all 50 states, we need to improve the delivery of care within the Medicaid system, so that care can be higher quality, less expensive, and of higher value for all children. Building on work that the ACA started, we will improve the ways that doctors and nurses deliver care on the front lines and continually strive for effective, timely, and patient-centered care as we strengthen Medicaid and CHIP in the twenty-first century.

QUESTION 4

Few private sector workers have access to paid family leave and many are unable to afford unpaid family leave. Parents must be able to care for their newborn infants and their sick children. How do you plan to reform workplace policies to ensure that parents are able to promote the health of their children?

I have proposed tax relief to cover the cost of childcare and to provide time off for the mothers of newborn infants. The most efficient approach is to create incentives for private sector employers and employees to pursue family-friendly policies on their own initiative by letting employees keep more of their own paychecks. My administration will do just that.

Today, the United States is the only developed nation in the world with no guaranteed paid leave of any kind. This is unacceptable.

No one should have to choose between keeping their job and taking care of a sick family member. Too many moms have to return to work just days after their babies are born. And too many dads and parents of adopted children don't get any paid leave at all. Neither do sons and daughters struggling to take care of their aging parents.

As president, I will fight to pass twelve weeks of paid family leave and up to twelve weeks of paid medical leave. And we'll pay for it by making sure the wealthy and corporations pay their fair share – not by increasing taxes on the middle class. Supporting families isn't a luxury – it's a health imperative and an economic necessity. And it's past time for our policies to catch up to the way families live and work today.