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PPC CAPITOL CONNECTION

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What Matters Now in Washington:

- Interest is growing in the House and Senate to reauthorize loan repayment for pediatric subspecialists. [More...](#)
- The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) cannot move forward with its plan to rollback protections for migrant children, a federal judge ruled. [More...](#)
- The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development released an updated strategic plan for the first time since the year 2000. [More...](#)
- Trump administration backs off of proposal to limit which studies can be used in developing environmental regulations. [More...](#)
- Congress passed a stopgap funding measure after it was unable to finish the appropriations process by the September 30 deadline. [More...](#)

EFFORTS TO ADDRESS SHORTAGES OF PEDIATRIC SUBSPECIALISTS GAIN TRACTION IN CONGRESS. As Congress contemplates renewing a number of health care workforce programs, there is bipartisan interest in both the House and Senate to reauthorize loan repayment for pediatric subspecialists. In September, Senators Jack Reed (D-R.I.) and Bill Cassidy (R-La.) introduced the Investment in Tomorrow's Pediatric Health Care Workforce Act (S. 2443), which would reauthorize the Pediatric Subspecialty Loan Repayment Program (PSLRP). This comes after a key House health committee advanced a bill that included identical language reauthorizing the program in July. PSLRP would provide \$35,000 in loan repayment per year for up to three years in exchange for practicing in an underserved area. The Senate is expected to prepare its own health care workforce legislation this fall, and the PPC held a virtual Subspecialty Day of Action on Thursday, October 10, to urge senators to cosponsor S. 2443 and include this provision in the Senate's health care workforce legislation. Loan repayment is one key tool to addressing critical physician workforce shortages and bolstering the academic pediatric pipeline.

FEDERAL JUDGE PRESERVES PROTECTIONS FOR MIGRANT CHILDREN IN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CUSTODY. A California district court has [rejected](#) a Department of Homeland Security (DHS) regulation that would have allowed for the [indefinite detention](#) of immigrant children by the federal government. The ruling leaves in place longstanding protections for children under the 1997 [Flores Settlement Agreement](#)—a court-supervised agreement that is itself the product of more than a decade of litigation against the federal government over its treatment of migrant children. Ruling in late September, federal

district Judge Dolly Gee found that the final regulation fails to implement the terms of the *Flores* agreement and that the agreement, as a result, remains in effect. This includes a requirement that children be held for no more than 20 days in federal custody and have access to certain minimum living standards. The courts will continue to exercise oversight of the federal government's treatment of migrant children unless Congress acts to alter *Flores*.

NICHD UNVEILS NEW STRATEGIC PLAN. The *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) has [released](#) a [strategic plan](#) outlining its research priorities for the next five years. It underscores the Institute's longstanding commitment to research aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of women, children, and people with intellectual, physical, and developmental disabilities. It also places special emphasis on research to better understand male reproductive health and the challenges experienced by adolescents during the transition to adulthood. In its announcement, NICHD made clear it will continue to partner with the academic community and other key stakeholders to turn the objectives set out in the plan into real-world results.

EPA WILL ALTER PROPOSAL THAT WOULD LIMIT AGENCY'S ABILITY TO USE CERTAIN SCIENTIFIC STUDIES IN RULEMAKING. Speaking at a congressional hearing, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Andrew Wheeler announced that the [agency would make changes to its controversial scientific transparency rule](#). Under the initial 2018 proposal, the EPA would only have been able to consider scientific data and findings for which all underlying data can be made publicly available and reproducible. The scientific and public health communities raised major concerns about the rule because it would have prevented the EPA from using many human health studies when developing clean air, water, and other environmental regulations. Despite this, the EPA administrator indicated that he continues to believe the underlying goal of the rule is worthwhile. The EPA will issue an [amended version of the proposal early next year](#).

FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2020 STARTS WITH FLAT FUNDING AS APPROPRIATIONS PROCESS DRAGS

ON. President Trump signed a [stopgap funding measure](#) on September 27 after Congress failed to complete the annual government funding process by the September 30 deadline. The measure will keep the government open through November 21 at current funding levels. While Congress reached a bipartisan budget deal to dramatically increase the legal limits on how much it is able to spend each year, partisan disagreements over reproductive health and immigration policy issues prevented Republicans and Democrats from finishing the process on time. Despite the impasse, there does appear to be a commitment on both sides of the Capitol to give the National Institutes of Health (NIH) another multi-billion-dollar funding increase in FY20, though funding for other important pediatric research and child health priorities is less certain. Additional work on final spending bills will continue as Congress returns from recess.