



April 19, 2021

Honorable Joni Ernst
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Ernst:

On behalf of the Iowa Pediatric Collaborative, comprised of Blank Children's Hospital, ChildServe, MercyOne Children's Hospital, and the University of Iowa Stead Family Children's Hospital, we would like to express our support for the "Pediatric Accelerate Childhood Therapies Act of 2019" (PACT Act) you plan to sponsor in the United States Senate. As the primary pediatric specialty providers in Iowa for children with complex medical conditions, the need for a robust pediatric research workforce is essential to our priority of providing state-of-the-art, innovative treatments for children.

The PACT Act recognizes the difficulties in attracting and retaining physician-scientists, especially early-career researchers, to the field of pediatric research. As the physician-scientist workforce ages, the future of pediatric medicine depends on a continuous pipeline of young scientists interested in pediatric research and advancements in child health. The return on investment for pediatric research goes far beyond improvements in child health. It is now recognized that adult health risks and long-term diseases have their antecedents early in life (even before birth) and that pediatric research is really lifespan research, with effects on the health of adults as well as children and families.¹ The number of slots available through the National Institutes of Health (NIH) pediatrician research training programs have declined in recent years, leading to the percentage of physicians who focus a portion of their time on pediatric research also declining. Additional support is needed to maintain this vital research necessary to improve health across the U.S.

¹ Pediatric research impacts and benefits from all of biomedical science. *Shurin SB, Castle VP J Pediatr. 2014 Jul; 165(1):4-5.*

Furthermore, children have unique developmental, physiological and psychological differences from adults, which makes pediatric-related research particularly important. The PACT Act would establish a NIH grant to support early-career pediatric researchers and direct NIH to collaborate with pediatric stakeholders to identify specific areas of current and emerging need for pediatric research. These are key first steps to improving innovation in child health practices and treatment.

We are extremely grateful for your attention to this important, but often overlooked, need in children's health. We look forward to supporting your work in the Senate on this meaningful legislation.

Sincerely,



Stephen R. Stephenson, MD

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