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October 1, 2021

The Honorable Elizabeth Warren
U.S. Senate
309 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Sharice Davids
U.S. House of Representatives
1541 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
U.S. House of Representatives
2207 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Warren, Representative Davids, and Representative Cole:

On behalf of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), a non-profit professional organization of 67,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical sub-specialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and wellbeing of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults, I am writing to share our endorsement of the *Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policy in the United States Act*.

The AAP expresses our profound sorrow and condolences following the recent discoveries of 215 unmarked graves by Canada's Tk'emlúps te Secwepemc First Nation at the Kamloops Indian Residential School and at least 751 unmarked graves by the Cowessess First Nation on the grounds of the former Marieval Indian Residential School. These discoveries in Canada should prompt reflection on the U.S.'s own federal policies and shameful history of forcibly removing American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) children from their families to distant Indian boarding schools. This is critical to address the intergenerational impact of the boarding schools, to shed light on the ongoing legacy of historical trauma and to promote healing.

The *Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policy in the United States Act* would establish the country's first formal commission to investigate and document the injustices of the Indian Boarding School Policies, which began in 1819 and continued into the 1960s. This Commission would also investigate the ongoing effects of historical and intergenerational trauma in AI/AN communities and develop recommendations for resources and assistance the federal government should provide to aid in the healing of ongoing trauma.

The AAP works extensively with pediatricians living in and serving AI/AN communities, including developing policy and recommendations for the care of this population through the work of AAP's Committee on Native American Child Health. Our 2021 Policy Statement on "Caring for American Indian and Alaska Native Children and Adolescents," outlines recommendations to improve the health of AI/AN children. This includes the recommendation that pediatricians create a medical home that acknowledges and is sensitive to discrimination in clinical settings and generations of unresolved traumas and racism that AI/AN children and families experience.

The AAP recognizes that AI/AN children face substantial health disparities, many of which are rooted in social determinants of health that stem from the historical trauma Native communities have faced throughout our history. A truth and healing commission can document these injustices and the impacts of intergenerational trauma on the health disparities AI/AN children face. This would also support the work of pediatricians to provide care for AI/AN children to promote optimal healing and wellbeing.

The AAP supports this legislation and stands ready to support the truth and healing commission in its efforts to uncover the truth and to seek healing and support for survivors. It is essential that public policy support AI/AN children by providing access to services to meet their health and developmental needs. Thank you for your work on behalf of children and families. If the AAP can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact Zach Laris in our Washington, D.C. office at 202/347-8600 or zlaris@aap.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lee Savio Beers', with a long, sweeping horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Lee Savio Beers, MD, FAAP
President
LSB/zml