



## North Carolina Pediatric Society

### Chapter President

W. Scott St. Clair, MD, FAAP  
Blue Ridge Pediatric & Adolescent  
Medicine  
579 Greenway Road, #200  
Boone, NC 28607  
Phone: (828) 262-0100  
wscottstclair@gmail.com

### Chapter Vice President

Susan Mims, MD, MPH, FAAP  
Mission Children's Hospital  
Missions Hospital, 509 Biltmore Ave  
Asheville, NC 28801  
828-213-1747  
Susan.Mims@msj.org

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Washington, NC

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Chapel Hill, NC

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### Executive Director

Elizabeth Hudgins, MPP  
1100 Wake Forest Road  
Suite 200  
Raleigh, NC 27604  
Phone: (919) 839-1156  
Fax: (919) 839-1158  
Elizabeth@ncpeds.org  
www.ncpeds.org

December 2, 2016

Senator Richard Burr  
US Senate  
217 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Burr:

Thank you for your service and attention to important issues affecting children and families.

On behalf of the NC Pediatric Society, I urge you to attach Family First to the continuing resolution and pass the legislation before Congress adjourns. The NC Pediatric Society represents almost 2000 members in NC seeking to foster physical, social, and emotional well-being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults.

The Family First Prevention Services Act of 2016 is a comprehensive, bipartisan effort to improve how the child welfare system serves children and families in adversity. Family First represents more than two years of work and vetting among a wide-range of stakeholders, including numerous high-quality congregate care providers. It is a pivotal opportunity for a major federal policy shift away from placing children in out-of-home care and toward keeping families together. Congregate care remains one of the options on the continuum, and the bill does not impose time limits or restrictions on the use of these settings for children who need them, but the focus is on keeping families together. The only changes this bill makes for congregate care providers is raising the standards for quality, so that all children in these settings benefit from the therapeutic value of the best providers, of which we have several in North Carolina.

Children in or at-risk for entering foster care are especially vulnerable as they are more likely to be exposed to trauma and often have complex medical needs. Using an evidence-based, prevention-focused approach, the legislation offers states the flexibility to use federal foster care funding to support mental health, substance abuse and in-home parenting skills programs for families of children at-risk of entering foster care.

Policies in Family First would improve the lives of vulnerable children and families by allowing federal foster care funds to be used for prevention services to keep families together and prevent unnecessary foster care placements. Family First would also improve the quality of facilities serving children in foster care with the highest behavioral health needs.

Family First is an important step in improving the health of particularly vulnerable children. We urge you to attach Family First to the continuing resolution.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. St. Clair". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "S" and a period at the end.

Scott St. Clair, MD, FAAP, Chapter President  
North Carolina Pediatric Society (NCPeds)