

North Carolina Chapter

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American Academy of Pediatrics

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North Carolina Pediatric Society

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September 23, 2021

Elizabeth Cuervo Tilson, MD, MPH, FAAP, FACPM

State Health Director

Chief Medical Officer

NC Department of Health and Human Services

Dear Dr. Tilson:

We submit this letter on behalf of the NC Pediatric Society, representing more than 2,300 pediatricians and other child health professionals across North Carolina.

As child health professionals, we are firmly committed to the importance of lifesaving immunizations and the importance of these required vaccines for school attendance per GS 130A-152. Unfortunately, the disruption due to the high rate of spread of the Delta variant of SARS-CoV2 in our communities has severely limited our ability to get children in the office to get vaccinated. Practices are being squeezed from every angle right now. We are experiencing record levels of demand for sick visits due to viral illnesses and trying to sort out if it is COVID or another illness. Many practices have a lower supply of visits due to being short-staffed and fewer visits per hour due to COVID disinfection protocols. We are also coping with the administrative burden of the biggest change to pediatric health care in NC in decades with the transition to Medicaid managed care. Many of our practices are also busy trying to administer COVID vaccine to patients, administering flu vaccines, and helping high risk patients and families who have tested positive for COVID receive monoclonal antibodies.

We are all concerned about the losses associated with the lack of in person learning and ask for a temporary delay in enforcement of the school immunization requirement and health assessments. We have heard from several of our practices who, despite their best efforts to catch patients up this summer, still have hundreds of vaccine delayed children who are being excluded from school this week.

We urge all parents whose children might be behind on immunizations or health assessments to reach out to their child's doctor, and strongly urge everyone 12 years old and older who is eligible for the COVID vaccine to get vaccinated as soon as possible so we can bring this pandemic to an end. If you have questions about the vaccine, ask your doctor!

Thank you to you and your team for all of your hard work to protect children and help our state get through this pandemic.

Sincerely,

Christoph Diasio, MD, FAAP

President,
North Carolina Pediatric Society