Legislative Overview
2019 Session

The Washington Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics represents over 1,000 pediatric providers across the state working to make Washington a better place for kids to grow and thrive. Our legislative priorities will help lay a foundation for a lifetime of health and well-being for all children in our state.

| GIVE CHILDREN ACCESS TO TIMELY, QUALITY HEALTH CARE |

**Bring pediatric Medicaid reimbursement to parity with Medicare rates.** In Washington 1 in every 2 children relies on Medicaid for health coverage, but the low rates paid by Medicaid make it increasingly difficult for providers to care for children. A two-year federal provision to bring Medicaid payment to Medicare levels ended in 2015, just as access began to improve. In some regions, clinics are closing their doors to children on Medicaid. Bringing pediatric Medicaid to parity with Medicare will improve access to care for Washington children and result in better disease prevention, earlier diagnosis and treatment, and fewer emergency room visits.

**Improve access to appropriate behavioral health care for children.** Behavioral health disorders affect up to 1 in 5 children, yet 80 percent of children in need go without treatment. Early identification and timely treatment is critical to ensure healthy development throughout childhood and into adulthood. Mental health problems that begin in childhood can persist or worsen over time: 50% of adults with mental health disorders experience emergence of their symptoms by age 14. We support investments in behavioral health care for kids on Apple Health, bringing psychotherapy rates to those of Medicare, in order to increase behavioral health integration for children in primary care, and help for children where and when they are identified in need.

| GIVE CHILDREN A STRONG START |

- **Create a statewide referral and linkage system** to connect families to the community resources they need to position children for the best possible outcomes.
- **Expand access to high-quality preschool** by increasing funding to the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program and broadening eligibility.
- Invest $9 million in **evidence-based light touch home visiting**, a proven strategy to support new parents and reduce childhood trauma.

| KEEP CHILDREN AND YOUTH SAFE |

**Raise the legal age to purchase tobacco and nicotine products to 21.** In Washington State, 104,000 kids now under 18 will eventually die of smoking-related disease and vaping has become commonplace at Washington high schools. Raising the age to purchase tobacco products to 21 led to a decline in teen smoking from 13 percent to 6 percent in Needham, Mass. Increasing the age for legal sale of tobacco will help prevent life-long nicotine addiction for our youth.

Amber Ulvenes | Legislative Liaison | amber@ulvenesconsulting.com | 360.280.0384
Sarah Rafton | Executive Director | srafton@wcaap.org | 206.293.3540