Section on Emergency Medicine Legislative Scholarship Report
Christian D. Pulcini, MD, MEd, MPH

This year’s legislative advocacy conference featured the most attendees in the history of the conference. Over 220 pediatricians, both generalists and subspecialists, attended to learn and advocate for children in the nation’s capital. Sessions featured updates on immigrant health, children’s health insurance, and immunizations from a variety of Academy leaders. Educational sessions included coalition building, tailoring your message, how to engage in advocacy with Chapters, and others led by Academy members and staff. Overall, a few themes resonated throughout the conference:

1) “The AAP is not partisan, and children are not partisan.” Leaders spoke extensively about the importance of advocating for children and encouraging legislators to work across party lines to ensure the health and well-being of children.

2) “Stay in the boat.” We need to have consistent messaging as individual pediatricians and as an organization, focused on messaging that is “clear, first, and credible”. When we deviate from this, we end up less effective and outside the boat.

3) “Hope is not a strategy.” There are serious threats to both Medicaid and CHIP in the upcoming year. Any legislation, whether it be block grants, per capita limits, etc, which will limit services and shift burden to states in regards to Medicaid would adversely affect children and families. Any cuts to CHIP, or holding it “hostage” for Medicaid cuts, is unacceptable.

4) “Vaccines are safe, effective, and save lives.”

5) “Children do not immigrate, they flee.” We support all children and their health, regardless of country of origin.
In regards to advocating on the hill, we urged legislators to renew CHIP for 5 years in a clean and efficient manner. We also explained to legislators that CHIP “stands on the shoulders” of Medicaid, and it was important not to cut funding for Medicaid.

Overall the meeting was very collegial and successful, and certainly an experience all physicians and trainees could benefit from both in and out of the SOEM. The portions of the conference I personally appreciated were the opportunities to work in small groups with colleagues throughout the conference and speak constructively on how we can best advocate for children. The conference featured many innovative group activities, which allowed us to collaborate and build momentum towards our hill visits.

The day on the hill, including speeches from AAP leaders and child health focused legislators, and meeting personally with many of the my legislators, made the experience extremely valuable and sustainable. I look forward to strengthening the relationships formed with my legislators moving forward, and I truly appreciated the opportunity to meet them with like-minded colleagues.

If there are any questions or concerns, especially on the upcoming CHIP authorization or Medicaid legislation proposals, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you sincerely to the Section of Emergency Medicine for this opportunity, and I look forward to engaging in the Section for many years to come!

Sincerely,

Christian D. Pulcini, MD, MEd, MPH

Christian.pulcini@gmail.com