June 14, 2013

The Honorable David Vitter
Ranking Member, Senate Committee
on Environment and Public Works
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Ranking Member Vitter:

On behalf of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), a non-profit professional organization of 60,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical sub-specialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults, I am writing to clarify the AAP position on chemical management reform legislation.

While the AAP applauded the display of bipartisanship, we have not endorsed the Chemical Safety Improvement Act. In the May 29 New York Times editorial “An Opening to Strengthen Chemical Regulations,” the AAP was erroneously listed as an endorser.

Environmental, public health, industry and consumer groups all agree that TSCA reform is long overdue. The law is outdated, ineffective and fails to offer protections against the tens of thousands of chemicals that have come onto the market since its passage more than 35 years ago, like phthalate plasticizers. The linkage between chemical exposure and cancer, developmental disabilities, asthma and other health conditions is well-established. Yet, Congress has been unable to approve meaningful TSCA reform since 1976.

The Chemical Safety Improvement Act represents potential for progress but amendments are needed. TSCA legislation must protect public health; apply reasonable standards to a broad number of chemicals; utilize common scientific standards and, most importantly, must consider the needs of pregnant women and children, principles that are consistent with AAP policy. The challenge rests on Senate leaders to maintain bipartisanship while also incorporating meaningful public health protections, especially for children, who are uniquely susceptible to the harms of chemical exposures. Anything less will harm child health and fail to earn AAP endorsement.

If we may provide further information or otherwise be of assistance, please contact the AAP Department of Federal Affairs, at 202-347-8600.

Sincerely,

Thomas K. McInerny, MD, FAAP
TKM/scc