Re: Improving the Earned Income Credit for Working Families

In response to the growing number of children living in poverty and the increasing number of low-income households in the United States, the American Academy of Pediatrics has focused its advocacy on poverty and child health. The Massachusetts Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics supports efforts to ease poverty for low and moderate income working families in the Commonwealth and **supports legislation to increase the state’s Earned Income Tax Credit for low and moderate wage workers.**

Poverty and low socioeconomic status are significant determinants of child health. Children living near, at, or below the poverty line have worse health and are at greater risk for developmental delay, asthma, ear infections, obesity, behavioral health problems, and child abuse and neglect. Infant mortality is higher amongst the poor and near poor. Child Poverty also adversely impacts health access across the life span and into adulthood.

As pediatricians, we see the impact of poverty on our patients and their families. This is not limited to urban or rural practices. It is an issue seen throughout the state, including suburban communities. Think about the struggle of low-income working families to make ends meet, to provide safe housing, food and other necessities for their children. Such stress affects the physical and mental health of both parents and children and impedes children’s abilities to learn while in school and sometimes, even stay in school at all.

**As a society, we need to do better to help low-income working families make ends meet and provide for their children. There is much that should be done, but we can start now by giving a boost to these families by increasing the state’s earned income tax credit (EITC).**

Research by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities has found a strong association between EITC participation and mother’s receiving prenatal care. This improves both maternal health and infant health (fewer children born at low weights). Also, children in families receiving EITC support have shown higher test scores, especially in elementary and middle schools, and higher high school graduation rates.

Several bills have been filed to increase the earned income tax credit and the Senate adopted an amendment to the state budget to increase the EITC.

The MCAAP urges the Legislature to increase the earned income tax credit to help low income working families who are struggling in this high cost of living state.