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Louis St. Petery, MD
American Academy of Pediatrics

Dear Dr. St. Petery,

Please accept this in reply to your letter from June 24.

I have worked with you, as well as Lisa Cosgrove, for many years and I hope that you can relay to your Board of Directors the kind of work that I have done, and how closely I have worked with the American Academy of Pediatrics, over the years.

In regards to your question about the Medicaid system: as you very well know, we have been working on this for at least three years. You also know that as Chairman of the Council on Legislation I stood up for the Pediatrician's and the pediatric patient's of Florida when an attempt was made to increase the payment of Medicaid to certain specialties and not to the Primary Care Physician's, including the Pediatrician's. At that point I was very clear with the Governor and the Secretary of AHCA that the FMA would not approve that practice.

You are also aware of the fight we had last year in the Legislature, because of not only the immunization schedule, but the mercury issue on the vaccine, etc; as well as the fight against some of the people pushing the autism issue and trying to confuse the people of Florida to the facts.

As far as the biggest challenges are concerned, there is no doubt that the first challenge, at this point, is the budget. The state budget has been reduced by billions of dollars for three years in a row and we do not see any improvement in sight. As you know, I have pushed very hard to improve the Medicaid rate of payment, to bring it to at least Medicare levels, and I have always thought that the children of the state should be the first people covered by the Medicaid program.

In regards to the most important issues our physician's are facing today, I believe that the number one issue is reimbursement, or the lack thereof. The number two issue is still the liability situation and the third is probably the ER coverage, or lack thereof, which is obviously linked to the reimbursement and liability issues.

As to balancing the Sub-specialists with the Primary Care Physician's and the Pediatrician's against the Internists, you know that I have defended the medical profession and I feel that this should be a level playing field and these are not just words, but I have, in the past, proven with my actions that I will try to preserve the equality between specialties.

I hope that these words can help your board understand, not only my purpose for the future, but the fact that I have already proven that the care of the children in our state, and the welfare of our Pediatrician's, is extremely important to me.

If I can be of any further assistance or answer any other questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,
Miguel A. Machado, MD
MAM/jp