



JAMES L. MADARA, MD
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, CEO

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September 13, 2019

The Honorable Alex M. Azar, II
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Hubert H. Humphrey Building, Room 509F
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

The Honorable Kevin K. McAleenan
Acting U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security
245 Murray Lane, SW
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Azar and Acting Secretary McAleenan:

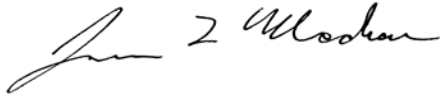
As the largest professional association for physicians and medical students, and the umbrella organization for state and national specialty medical societies, the American Medical Association (AMA) has been, and continues to be, deeply committed to ensuring the health and safety of all individuals regardless of immigration status. We write to strongly urge the Administration to allow asylum-seekers to receive all medically-appropriate care, including vaccinations, in a patient-centered, language, and culturally-appropriate way upon presentation for asylum regardless of country of origin.

Asylum-seekers are a vulnerable group that often face circumstances in which their health and well-being may have been compromised during their journey to seek safety. It is our understanding that the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) will not provide influenza vaccinations to migrants in its custody, even though flu outbreaks have been reported in CBP facilities. We believe that the current living conditions facing many children and families detained in CBP custody may aggravate the spread of infectious diseases such as the flu. The flu season will begin shortly, and we believe that it is in the best interest of public health for vaccinations to be given as soon as possible. As you know the flu can be particularly dangerous for very young children, pregnant women, and individuals with chronic medical conditions. Additionally, we believe that providing vaccinations to unaccompanied children as soon as possible will not only help in preventing the spread of flu in the Office of Refugee Resettlement shelters but, will keep our nation healthier as a whole.

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We urge the Administration to prioritize supporting and protecting the health and well-being of individuals and families seeking asylum. If you have any questions, please contact Margaret Garikes, Vice President for Federal Affairs, at margaret.garikes@ama-assn.org, or by calling 202-789-7409.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James L. Madara". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a distinct "M" at the end.

James L. Madara, MD