

July 22, 2019

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H232, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi:

As medical and mental health providers for women, children, and adolescents, we write to urge swift House passage of H.R. 3239, the *Humanitarian Standards for Individuals in Customs and Border Protection Custody Act*.

Firsthand accounts and reports by the Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General<sup>1</sup> and media of overcrowding, lack of showers and handwashing stations, open toilets, insufficient or inedible food, constant light exposure, and children and pregnant women becoming sick due to unsanitary conditions are deeply troubling. For children, exposure to these conditions can be traumatizing and lead to toxic stress, which can disrupt a child's brain architecture and affect his or her short- and long-term health, resulting in physical symptoms, changes in bodily functions, and developmental and behavioral problems.

We believe passage of H.R. 3239 is an important first step toward improving minimum humanitarian conditions for individuals in Customs and Border Protection (CBP) custody, especially children, pregnant women, and the elderly. H.R. 3239 would set requirements for health screenings, nutrition, water sanitation, hygiene, and shelter for individuals while in CBP custody. The tragic deaths of children in CBP custody are evidence for why timely, appropriate medical and mental health screening and care is so crucial.

We urge the House to take up and pass this bill on the floor of the House of Representatives as soon as possible. Enacting this legislation is an important first step in ensuring the health and safety of women, children, and adolescents in CBP custody.

Sincerely,

Academic Pediatric Association  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General, *Management Alert- DHS Needs to Address Dangerous Overcrowding and Prolonged Detention of Children and Adults in the Rio Grande Valley*. July 2, 2019.  
[https://www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2019-07/OIG-19-51-Jul19\\_.pdf](https://www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2019-07/OIG-19-51-Jul19_.pdf)

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
American College of Physicians  
American Medical Association  
American Pediatric Society  
American Psychological Association  
Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs  
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners  
Pediatric Policy Council  
Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine  
Society for Pediatric Research

cc: The Honorable Steny H. Hoyer  
The Honorable James E. Clyburn  
The Honorable Raul Ruiz, MD