President's Column: AAP-CA Advocacy Day Recap

Nicole Webb, MD, FAAP
President, AAPCA1

Happy end of school year, everyone! This is my last column as your AAPCA1 President, and as I write this I am filled with gratitude for the tremendous honor and privilege it has been to serve you all in that way.

One of the most impactful experiences of my own training was attending **Advocacy Day** as a resident. I got to meet then Assemblymember Richard Pan, and provide testimony in support of his AB2109, which required parents to consult with physicians before obtaining a personal belief exemption from vaccination, and paved the way for SB277, which eliminated those exemptions. Seeing a pediatrician in the state legislature and watching the impact of bringing scientific expertise to policymaking in real time, galvanized me and reinforced my commitment to advocacy as a central focus of my career.



In the years since I've had the privilege of attending many advocacy days with different organizations, and none fill me with optimism and pride as much as our AAP California Resident Advocacy Day. Seeing our trainees in the state putting it all together, speaking passionately with elected officials about what's right for kids, always inspires me and recharges my batteries.

So it was very fitting that one of my last acts as your president was to attend the 2**025 AAP-CA Advocacy Day,** with pediatric residents and faculty volunteers from across our large, diverse and wonderful state. This is a joint effort between our amazing **CA Resident Advocacy Collaborative**, currently led by **Drs. Serena Yang** and **Amy Whittle,** and **AAP California**. It is an annual 2-day event, with day 1 focused on learning and collaboration among residents and faculty from across the state, and day 2 focused on legislative advocacy and organized by our **AAP CA SGA (State Government Affairs) Committee.**

This year's sessions covered topics including effective advocacy for childhood immunizations, providing statewide mental health consultation, protecting immigrant and refugee children and families, strategies for protecting Medicaid coverage, and more. We were honored by many distinguished guest speakers including **Drs. Dean Blumberg, Petra Steinbuchel, Raul Gutierrez, and Jyothi Marbin, AAP Immediate**

Past President Dr. Ben Hoffman, CA Surgeon General Dr. Diana Ramos, and **CA state Senator Caroline Menjivar.**

The event brought together a vibrant community of pediatricians and trainees committed to advocacy, with 130 attendees participating in 61 legislative office visits across the two-day event. It was a wonderful affirmation of why we do this work, and so exciting to see the next generation of pediatric leaders embracing advocacy as a critical tool in their repertoire of skills.

As I transition out of the role of president, I look forward to welcoming our incoming president, **Dr. Neel Patel.** Neel is a fierce advocate and longtime leader in our chapter who has championed significant change during his time as vice president. I am excited for all that is to come with him as our chapter president.

As I have said here, when times are hard, we must stick together, find those who lift us up and propel us forward, who will lend an ear and an open mind when moving forward feels impossible. We are certainly navigating very challenging times as pediatric healthcare providers, but it is because of each one of you that I know forward progress will continue. Together, we will keep showing up for kids and communities every day, because it's the right thing to do, and because they're counting on us.

With deepest gratitude and respect,
Nikki



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