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Chairman Elijah E. Cummings
House Committee on Oversight and Reform
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Jim Jordan
U.S. House of Representatives
2056 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Statement of the American Medical Association to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Reform

Dear Chairman Cummings and Ranking Member Jordan:

The American Medical Association (AMA) appreciates the opportunity to provide this statement to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Reform as part of the hearings entitled, “Kids in Cages: Inhumane Treatment at the Border,” and “The Trump Administration’s Child Separation Policy: Substantiated Allegations of Mistreatment.” As the largest professional association for physicians and the umbrella organization for state and national medical specialty societies, the AMA has been, and continues to be, deeply committed to ensuring the health and safety of all individuals regardless of immigration status.

We believe that conditions in Customs and Border Protection (CBP) custody are inconsistent with evidence-based recommendations for appropriate care and treatment of children and pregnant women. Conditions in CBP facilities, which include open toilets, constant light exposure, insufficient food and water, extreme temperatures, and forcing pregnant women and children to sleep on cement floors, are traumatizing. Such facilities are simply not appropriate places for children or for pregnant women. We, along with numerous other medical and mental health organizations, have offered our [strong support](#) for passage of H.R. 3239, the “Humanitarian Standards for Individuals in Customs and Border Protection Custody Act,” and urge Members of Congress to work to advance this type of legislation as part of any humanitarian response to the situation at the southern border.

Families seeking refuge in the U.S. already endure emotional and physical stress, which is only exacerbated when they are separated from one another or held in family detention facilities during the pendency of their immigration proceedings. It is well known that childhood trauma and adverse childhood experiences created by inhumane treatment often create negative health impacts that can last an individual’s entire lifespan. Given our concerns, we strongly urge Congress and the Administration to work with the AMA and other medical and mental health care experts to develop policies that ensure the health of children and families is protected throughout the immigration process. We further urge Congress and the Administration to work together to give priority to supporting families and protecting the health and well-being of the children within those families.

Sincerely,

James L. Madara, MD