

CALIFORNIA ACADEMY of CHILD & ADOLESCENT PSYCHIATRY

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October 6, 2025

Statement from the California Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (CALACAP)

The California Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (CALACAP) is the statewide umbrella organization that unites California's four regional councils of child and adolescent psychiatrists. Representing about 2000 members, our mission is to advocate for children, adolescents, and their families in the arenas of legislation, public policy, and clinical service administration wherever those decisions affect youth mental health.

We are deeply concerned by recent federal decisions and public statements and by the Make America Healthy Again report, which contains inaccuracies and misleading assertions that jeopardize youth health including their mental health. The report mischaracterizes the risks and benefits of evidence-based healthcare interventions, including those essential for people living with psychiatric illness. Using these misstatements to restrict access to care risks increasing suffering, undermining recovery and heightening suicide risk. In the absence of appropriate services, communities face predictable harms: increased absenteeism from school, increased criminalization of mental illness, expanded reliance on civil commitment, and diminished opportunities for individuals to lead productive, meaningful lives. Such policies also perpetuate stigma, spread fear, and deter families from seeking help when they need it most.

Among the most troubling concerns are the following:

- **School-based mental health screening:**
The MAHA report discounts the importance of proven school-based screening that identifies students who need timely support and connects them to appropriate care
- **Medication safety and efficacy:**
The MAHA report misrepresents the well-documented evidence regarding the safety and efficacy of FDA-approved treatments including selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) for depression and anxiety; stimulants for ADHD; and antipsychotic medications used for bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and severe irritability associated with autism spectrum disorder
- **Statements regarding autism spectrum disorder:**
Recent statements made by federal leadership regarding autism risk factors are not supported by the body of evidence on this topic. These statements create confusion for patients and families, may cause harm and detract from a focus on developing well-designed research studies aimed at identifying the risk factors for and possible treatments for autism spectrum disorder

We have thus lost confidence in the priorities and judgment currently guiding federal health policy. This position is not grounded in politics or partisanship; it is rooted in our duty of care to patients and families. Americans deserve healthcare policies that protect public health, rely on accurate data and uphold the principles of evidence-based medicine.

We join medical experts and scientific colleagues across the country in calling for evidence-based guidelines that keep children and families safe. We urge our elected

representatives to defend the integrity of our healthcare system as well as the lives and civil rights of the millions of Americans who rely on effective, evidence-based psychiatric treatment. We urge our congressional representatives and senators to act swiftly to ensure that those entrusted with national health policy possess the training, experience, and integrity required to safeguard the health and well-being of all Americans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Ijeaku", with a stylized, cursive script.

Ijeoma Ijeaku, MD, MPH, DFAPA
CALACAP President