



## PPC Action Alert

### Support the Next Generation of Pediatrician Scientists

Pediatric research is key to improving the quality of care children receive and unlocking the next generation of cures, but there are a number of barriers to developing and maintaining a pediatric research workforce that can meet the needs of today's—and tomorrow's—young people. **Tell your legislators to co-sponsor the [Pediatricians Accelerate Childhood Therapies \(PACT\) Act \(H.R. 3773/S. 1357\)](#) to support the next generation of pediatrician scientists and strengthen the pediatric research pipeline.**

The transition from training to full-time pediatrician scientist can pose significant challenges in the long-term recruitment and retention of pediatric researchers. As recent pediatric trainees make decisions about the type of career they will pursue, the research opportunities available to those with research training at that moment can determine whether they will pursue a pediatric research career moving forward.

Despite years of historic federal investments in biomedical research, National Institutes of Health (NIH) extramural research funding remains highly competitive, making it difficult for early career pediatrician scientists to obtain independent research funding and establish a career in pediatric research. The challenges associated with securing NIH funding are exacerbated by other factors that can play into career decision-making, such as generally lower pay in academic institutions as compared to private practice and constraints on research time from increased clinical, teaching, and administrative duties.

Developing the next generation of pediatric researchers requires policy solutions to address the dynamics that discourage research-trained pediatricians from pursuing an academic career. The PACT Act would create a new trans-NIH career development award for early career pediatricians to help bridge the transition from training to full-time pediatrician scientist. These new awards would be used to fund research as well as activities like attending conferences to seek guidance and mentorship to help in the process of reaching research independence. The PACT Act would also make permanent the Trans-NIH Pediatric Research Consortium, which has played a crucial role in facilitating cross-institute pediatric research collaboration and agenda setting.

**Please email or call your U.S. representative and U.S. senators as soon as possible and ask them to co-sponsor the [Pediatricians Accelerate Childhood Therapies Act \(H.R. 3773/S. 1357\)](#).** A template email and phone script specifically for contacting your U.S. representative and U.S. senators is available below.

### Contact Your Members of Congress Today

Reach out to your U.S. representative and U.S. senators today and urge them to co-sponsor the Pediatricians Accelerate Childhood Therapies Act (H.R. 3773/S. 1357) by phone or email.

**By Phone:** You can call the U.S. Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121 to be connected to your representative's and senators' offices. You also can find your U.S. representative by going to [House.gov](#) and using the "Find Your Representative" feature at the top right of the page. To identify your U.S. senators, go to [Senate.gov](#) and use the

"Find Your Senators" feature at the top left of the page. Phone numbers for each of your legislators' Washington, DC, offices is available on their websites.

### **Talking points**

- Hello. My name is **{First and last name}** from **{Town}**. I am an academic pediatrician specializing in **{insert your area of research expertise e.g., pediatric endocrinology, etc.}**, and I am calling today to urge **{Representative's/Senator's name}** to co-sponsor the bipartisan Pediatricians Accelerate Childhood Therapies (PACT) Act.
- Pediatrician scientists play a critical role in advancing child health. Children are not simply little adults, so the development of new treatments and cures to improve child health requires investigators who specialize in pediatrics.
- However, pediatrician scientists often struggle to attain independent research funding early in their careers because funding for extramural research awards at the National Institutes of Health is highly competitive. As a result, many pediatricians with training and interest in conducting research pursue clinical care or other work and do not return to research in the future.
- The PACT Act would help address this workforce pipeline issue by creating a new trans-NIH pediatric research career development mechanism to fund early career pediatric scientists and act as a bridge to a career in research. This represents an important step toward ensuring more research-trained pediatricians are able to pursue careers in research.
- I hope **{Representative's/Senator's name}** will consider co-sponsoring the PACT Act.
- Thank you for all you do for children.

**By Email:** You can email your representative and senators through their website. You can find your U.S. representative by going to [House.gov](https://www.house.gov) and using the "Find Your Representative" feature at the top right of the page. To identify your U.S. senators, go to [Senate.gov](https://www.senate.gov) and use the "Find Your Senators" feature at the top left of the page. Send your message directly using the contact forms on your legislators' websites using the template text below.

You can customize this email by adding an additional paragraph with specific information about yourself and your state, such as this:

I am an academic pediatrician specializing in **{insert your area of research expertise e.g., pediatric endocrinology, etc.}**, which means I am **{insert potential practical outcome of research e.g., looking for a cure for Type 1 diabetes}**.

### **Email text:**

*Subject:* Strengthen the Next Generation of Pediatric Researchers

As an academic pediatrician and a constituent, I am urging you to co-sponsor the bipartisan Pediatricians Accelerate Childhood Therapies (PACT) Act (H.R. 3773/S. 1357). This legislation will help support early career pediatrician scientists and strengthen the pipeline of pediatric researchers.

Pediatrician scientists play a critical role in advancing child health. Children are not simply little adults, so the development of new treatments and cures to improve child health requires investigators who specialize in pediatrics. The broad scope of pediatric research questions also requires researchers with a diverse array of

disciplinary backgrounds, ranging from basic science, translational, community-based, health services, and child health policy research.

Despite the need, there are multiple challenges to developing and maintaining a sufficient pediatric research workforce. In particular, the transition from pediatric trainee to full-time pediatrician scientist represents one of the most significant hurdles in the recruitment and retention of pediatrician scientists, and attrition among pediatricians with research training is common at this career stage. A key driver of this reality is National Institutes of Health (NIH) extramural research funding, which is highly competitive to secure and can prevent early-career researchers from attaining independent funding that can sustain an academic career. This is the case even for early-career researchers that have benefitted from NIH-funded fellowship programs or other training mechanisms.

The PACT Act would help address these workforce pipeline issues by creating a new trans-NIH pediatric research career development mechanism. This mechanism will allow NIH to fund pediatric investigators conducting research across key pediatric research areas as they build their careers as pediatrician scientists. It would also act as a bridge to a career in research by allowing funding not just for the conduct of research but also for activities like attending conferences to seek guidance and mentorship to help them reach research independence.

The need to bolster the workforce of pediatric researchers working on groundbreaking treatments is great. Across a range of conditions, it is not uncommon for children to have access to fewer treatments than adults or for disease states impacting children to be understudied. The PACT Act represents an important step towards ending this reality.

Please consider co-sponsoring the Pediatricians Accelerate Childhood Therapies Act. Thank you for all you do.