

Massachusetts Chapter

OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS

INCORPORATED IN MASSACHUSETTS

Supporting the Role of Pappas Rehabilitation Hospital for Children in the Care of Medically Complex Children and Youth in Massachusetts – 3/26/2025

The Massachusetts Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (MCAAP) believes that all children be offered appropriate and equitable access to high-quality health services, including inpatient and specialty care. We are deeply concerned about the impact of the potential closure of Pappas Rehabilitation Hospital for Children (PRHC), the only Massachusetts public hospital that serves some of the state's most vulnerable children and youth. It is critical that considerations be made to ensure that the patients and families who have relied on PRHC for comprehensive complex pediatric services continue to have access to the child-centered medical, therapeutic, and education services that are not found at any other public hospitals.

Pappas Rehabilitation Hospital for Children offers long-term care to children and youth with physical and developmental disabilities, many of whom require intensive physical, speech/language, and occupational therapy to assist them attain optimal physical skills and cognitive and emotional growth. While the facility's aging infrastructure sorely needs updating after decades of inattention, the on-campus public school, highly expert therapists, nursing and medical specialists, and services that include hydrotherapy, hippotherapy, vocational training, and wheelchair sports are not replicated in any other public hospital. Until other viable alternatives are available, the existing infrastructure could undergo a limited renovation to deliver care while continuing to draw upon the dedicated and knowledgeable staff who are capable and committed to serving this population.

Moreover, parents of current and past patients believe the specialized environment at PRHC has been superior in many cases to their local community-based services. Transferring the current cohort of patients to a distant adult hospital that is far from families, that has no specialized pediatric services and has no pediatric recreational or educational capacity is neither the most compassionate nor the best care. Potentially, it compounds the hardship these families have already faced. Additionally, with current pediatric workforce issues, it is unlikely that the experienced pediatric-trained professionals can be hired in another location. These patients and families also have established trusting relationships with Boston-area pediatric subspecialists who are the recognized experts in their fields. These relationships will be disrupted by moving over two hours west of their current location.

The MCAAP stands for family-centered care, the involvement of families and communities in care decisions, and the importance of maintaining long-term physician-patient relationships for optimal health. The MCAAP encourages the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to hold appropriate public hearings and consult with key stakeholders, including families, former patients, and pediatric subspecialists to design a more innovative solution to meet the needs of the state and the Pappas community.