Dear [ELECTED OFFICIAL],

As a steward of the mental and physical health and well-being of the children of [YOUR MUNICIPALITY], I write to inform you that the foundation for their care is crumbling due to the COVID19 pandemic. The majority of pediatricians in the area are members of independently owned private practices consisting of between one and ten physicians. For each physician, our practices employ between 2 and 5 support staff, and run on very tight margins compared to the larger hospital system owned practices, and do not have significant cash reserves on hand.

The COVID19 crisis threatens the very existence of our practices in many ways:

* The threat of infection has caused families to defer care.
* In order to prevent the spread of infection, practices have voluntarily restricted well visits to those for children up to age 2 who need vaccinations to prevent a measles or pertussis outbreak from occurring on the heels of the COVID19 pandemic.
* We are only seeing the most urgent cases in our offices, encouraging our nurses to spend extra time on the phones providing advice to our patients’ families.
* As we convert to telemedicine appointments so we can serve our patients, the insurance companies have been slow to implement protocols to quickly process our claims. Additionally, any attempts to extend reimbursement to cover telemedicine well-visits (essential for detecting emotional and developmental abnormalities) have been stalled by the insurance companies.

The above factors, especially the final one, threaten the very existence of these small businesses which are working to keep children out of the emergency rooms and urgent care facilities, and maintain immunization rates, which benefits both the community and the insurers. While federal help appears to be on the way, there is no guarantee that it will arrive soon enough to keep our practices open. At this critical time in the local healthcare system, when hospitals and urgent care providers will not have the additional capacity to absorb the care of pediatric patients, we implore you to implement additional supports for pediatric practices and pressure the insurance companies to equitably pay us for our services. It is only a matter of time before the insurers will approach Congress for a rescue package and it will be very difficult to support those efforts if they have already allowed the foundation for the care of children to fall apart.

Sincerely,

David A. Topa, MD