

# American Academy of Pediatrics



DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™  
NYS AAP, District II, A coalition of Chapters 1, 2 & 3

April 25, 2022

## **Memo of Support A. 9604/S. 8937**

### **Establish Runaway & Homeless Youth Rights to Medical Consent**

The New York State American Academy of Pediatrics, representing more than 5,000 pediatricians from across New York State fully supports A. 9604.

This legislation will offer runaway and homeless youth the option of consenting to their own medical and mental health treatment. Currently, medical and mental health professionals across the state are confronted by young people who know they need help and want needed services, but who cannot get that consent from parents who have either abused them, rejected them, or clearly indicated that their gender expression is not welcome in the biological family. That New York State would continue to support the negation of the right to consent from otherwise mature minors, runs counter to its support for LGBTQI youth and other adolescents who find themselves without family support, in all other areas of recognition.

Turning 18 is not a magical developmental moment for most adolescents. Young people who have confronted the hard choices that may lead them to runaway and or become homeless, who may arrive at the doors of the social services and/or medical providers, or the offices of their former pediatrician or at the emergency room of a local hospital deserve the right to decide on their care. They should not be confronted with the draconian choice of contacting parents or caregivers from whom they are estranged for approval or face the denial of needed and wanted care.

The care we are discussing will never be provided in a vacuum. A professional, with experience in adolescent development will always be available to talk with the young person about what is being offered and what the consent includes. All risks and risk benefit discussions would be exactly the same as those with all other people. The only difference here is that we are affording young people access to their own autonomy.

New York State's current narrow definition of runaway and/or homeless youth is a barrier to care for hundreds of young people struggling with multiple life challenges. We urge the legislature to pass this bill this session and offer these already marginalized young people a semblance of autonomy.

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