

9 January 2026

**Open letter to:**

Dr Andrew Racine  
President  
The American Academy of Pediatrics  
and to US pediatricians at the point of care

**Re: The vital medical ethical principle that was abandoned – and must now be restored**

This letter is written in response to the American Academy of Pediatrics' recent legal action challenging changes to federal vaccination policy. The court proceedings are not the focus here. They simply bring into sharp relief a deeper issue that has not been addressed – and which cannot be resolved through law, litigation, or policy maneuvering.

**That issue is medical ethics.**

For years pediatricians in the United States have administered vaccines in jurisdictions operating under vaccine mandates, where refusal carries penalties – exclusion from education, loss of access to services, and institutional pressure on families. Under these conditions, **consent is not voluntary**.

This raises a question that is not political, not legal – **it is ethical**:

**Can a pediatrician ethically proceed with a medical intervention when refusal is penalized, and consent is therefore not voluntary?**

Medical ethics has long answered this clearly. **Consent obtained under coercion is not valid consent in any ethical framework.** Where consent is not voluntary, the ethical precondition for intervention does not exist.

**The obligation to obtain voluntary informed consent rests with the pediatrician at the point of care.** This duty is personal and non-delegable. It cannot be transferred by policy, schedules, mandates, institutions, public health authorities, or professional bodies.

**Without voluntary informed consent, a pediatrician cannot ethically proceed – and no law, mandate, policy, emergency framework, or grant of immunity can change that.**

While refusal of childhood vaccination continues to carry penalties in the United States – including exclusion from education and institutional pressure on families – **have pediatricians ever been instructed to stop administering vaccines under mandates?**

Has the American Academy of Pediatrics issued explicit guidance warning pediatricians that **consent obtained under threat of penalty is not voluntary and therefore not ethically valid?**

Has the Academy advised pediatricians that, **where refusal carries penalties, they must not proceed with vaccination?**

If such guidance has been issued, it should be clearly identified and reaffirmed.

If it has not, the profession must now confront why a vital medical ethical principle was not articulated or upheld: **without voluntary informed consent, a pediatrician cannot ethically proceed.**

**The ethical integrity of pediatrics depends upon it.**

Sincerely

**Elizabeth Hart**

Independent researcher on medical ethics and vaccination policy

[vaccinationispolitical.net](http://vaccinationispolitical.net)

cc: Board of Directors, American Academy of Pediatrics