May 26, 2017

The Honorable Jack Reed
U.S. Senate
728 Hart Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Johnny Isakson
U.S. Senate
131 Russell Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Durbin
U.S. Senate
711 Hart Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Reed, Durbin and Isakson:

The American Academy of Dermatology Association (Academy), which represents more than 13,500 dermatologists nationwide, would like to express our gratitude for your introduction and the passage of S. Res. 182 designating May 2017 as Melanoma Awareness Month. The Academy is pleased to offer its support for this resolution, which sends a strong message that promoting protection from ultraviolet radiation is a priority of the U.S. Senate.

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States. Current estimates are that one in five Americans will develop skin cancer in his or her lifetime. Experiencing five or more blistering sunburns between ages 15 and 20 increases one’s melanoma risk by a staggering 80 percent and nonmelanoma skin cancer risk by 68 percent. Because exposure to UV radiation is the most preventable risk factor for all skin cancers, the Academy encourages everyone to protect their skin from the sun’s harmful UV rays by seeking shade, wearing protective clothing and using a sunscreen with a Sun Protection Factor of 30 or higher.

Children are particularly at risk for skin damage from ultraviolet radiation because their skin is not yet fully developed and because their skin cells are dividing at an accelerated pace compared with adults. Increasing intermittent sun exposure in childhood and during one’s lifetime is associated with an increased risk of squamous cell carcinoma, basal cell carcinoma and melanoma. The good news is that new research has found that daily sunscreen use can cut the incidence of melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, in half.

To prevent skin cancer in the future, a change in our culture, including an understanding of what healthy skin looks like, is needed. All Americans, and especially physicians, public health agencies, and child care professionals, need to work toward that change. The message that the public receives from its visible leaders and elected officials can also play an important role in this effort. S. Res. 182 demonstrates your leadership and commitment, as members of the U.S. Senate,
to promote prevention of skin cancer and shift the public understanding of the risks of UV exposure in children.

The Academy is hopeful this resolution will affect change and promote sun safety and skin cancer prevention for our nation’s children. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Christine O’Connor, the Academy’s Associate Director, Congressional Policy, at coconnor@aad.org or (202) 609-6330.

Sincerely,

Henry Lim, MD, FAAD
President, American Academy of Dermatology Association