

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0702

April 27, 2007

Support the Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention Act of 2007

Dear Colleague:

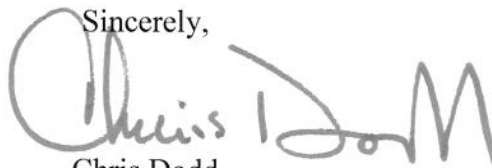
As Child Abuse Awareness Month draws to a close, it is important to remember that child abuse and neglect remains a well-documented tragedy in this country; according to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) almost 900,000 children were victims in 2005. More than four children die every single day as a result of abusive maltreatment. Babies are particularly vulnerable; in 2005, children aged 12 months or younger accounted for nearly 42 percent of all child abuse and neglect fatalities and children under age 3 accounted for almost 77 percent. Yet even these disturbing statistics may not paint an accurate picture; most experts agree that child abuse is widely under-reported.

Abusive head trauma, including Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS), is the leading cause of death of physically abused children, in particular for infants younger than one. When a frustrated caregiver loses control and violently shakes a baby or impacts the baby's head, the trauma can kill the child or cause severe injuries and lifelong disabilities. SBS affects between 1,200 and 1,600 children every year, of which between one-quarter and one-third will die and another one-third will suffer permanent, severe disabilities.

Yesterday I introduced the Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention Act of 2007, S.1204, which would establish a national public health campaign to educate Americans about the dangers of shaking, as well as healthy preventive approaches for frustrated parents and caregivers coping with a crying or fussy infant. The initiative includes development of a National Action Plan to identify effective, evidence-based strategies for prevention and awareness of SBS, and establishment of a cross-disciplinary advisory council to help coordinate national efforts. It ensures support for families who have been affected by SBS, and for families and caregivers struggling with infant crying, through a 24-hour hotline and an informational website. All of these activities are to be implemented through the coordination of existing programs and/or the establishment of new efforts.

Please join me in this effort to protect our youngest and most vulnerable citizens by cosponsoring S.1204, the Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention Act of 2007. This legislation brings together the best in current prevention, awareness and education practices so that we can look toward the day when this horrible form of child abuse is eradicated. For more information, or to cosponsor, please feel free to contact Sharon Lewis (8-3453) in my office.

Sincerely,



Chris Dodd