

NATIONAL CHILD ABUSE COALITION

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March 30, 2011

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations
Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As members of the National Child Abuse Coalition committed to strengthening the federal response to the protection of children and the prevention of child abuse and neglect, we urge your support for maintaining essential funding in fiscal year 2011 to programs serving vulnerable children and their families. In the face of massive, unprecedented cuts proposed in the name of fiscal responsibility and deficit reduction, we appeal to you to recognize the value of investing in young children for the sake of our nation's future.

Spending on child protective services, on Early Head Start and on prevention programs supporting healthy child development has not contributed to the growth in the federal deficit. The discretionary spending cuts proposed in the name of unburdening future generations will jeopardize, not safeguard, the futures of our nation's vulnerable children. What might appear to be savings immediately could run into billions of dollars in long-term expenses.

The annual cost to the nation of child abuse and neglect has been estimated by Prevent Child Abuse America at \$103.8 billion. Failing to invest in the protection and healthy development of children can only exacerbate this condition. The direct annual costs of abuse and neglect of children total \$33.1 billion:

- Hospitalization for maltreated children suffering serious injuries: \$6.6 billion
- Mental health care costs for child maltreatment victims needing treatment: \$1.1 billion
- Child welfare services to protect abused and neglected children: \$25 billion
- Law enforcement costs for police intervention: \$33 million

The indirect costs associated with the long-term or secondary effects of child maltreatment reach an annual total of \$70.7 billion:

- Special education required for maltreated children with learning disorders: \$2.4 billion
- Juvenile delinquency costs for offenders abused or neglected as children: \$7.2 billion
- Mental health and health care costs for adults attributable to maltreatment experienced in childhood: \$68 million
- Adult criminal justice system dealing with criminal behavior linked to earlier child maltreatment: \$28 billion
- Lost productivity to society in terms of loss of potential lifetime earnings to adults seriously injured by childhood maltreatment: \$33 billion

Already states are hard pressed to treat children or protect them from further harm, and federal funds have not kept pace with the needs of communities for supporting families and protecting children. According to the most recent report on child maltreatment published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, over one-third of child victims (40.1%) in 2009 received no services following a substantiated report of maltreatment. The high number of

abused and neglected children without services remains particularly troubling when the youngest children at the greatest risk of vulnerability had the highest victimization rate.

Instead of cutting funds to federal programs dedicated to protecting vulnerable children and preventing them from harm, we urge you to designate \$10 million in new funding to the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) grants proposed in President Obama's 2011 budget, for "a new competitive grant program to support States' implementation and increased use of evidenced-based child maltreatment prevention programs and activities." We ask you and your colleagues to maintain this new funding with the proposed increase in the final appropriations measure for 2011.

Investing in evidence-based strategies that strengthen protective factors is cost-effective, saving money in the long-term. There are many examples of individual programs using research behind a protective factors framework for their work. For example, an analysis of an evidence-based Strengthening Families program in Iowa based on the protective factors was found to have a return of \$9.60 for every dollar spent. This is cost-effective budgeting!

Funding to help states protect children and support families is critical. As the U.S. economy has worsened, increases in reports of child maltreatment have been linked to the weakened state of the economy. The National Research Council has identified unemployment among the stresses associated with child maltreatment in families. Research has shown us that child maltreatment rates are higher in areas with unusually high rates of unemployment. In times of crisis, families need additional supports and services to prevent maltreatment from occurring.

We are grateful to you for your commitment to ensuring that children at risk of abuse or neglect and their families receive the services necessary for their healthy development, and we appreciate your leadership to promote these opportunities through funding in CAPTA, Early Head Start and other federal programs to protect children and to prevent child abuse and neglect. Thank you for your attention to our request. If you would like additional information, please contact Tom Birch, legislative counsel for the National Child Abuse Coalition, at 202-347-3666 or bircht@earthlink.net.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Children and Families
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Humane Association
American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Child Welfare League of America
Children and Family Futures
Children's Advocacy Institute
Children's Healthcare Is a Legal Duty
Every Child Matters Education Fund
Family Violence Prevention Fund
National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds
National Association of Counsel for Children
National Association of Social Workers
National Coalition to End Child Abuse Deaths
National Exchange Club Foundation
National Network to End Domestic Violence
National Respite Coalition
Parents Anonymous
Prevent Child Abuse America
Stop It Now!
Voices for America's Children