

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 23, 2009

Director Peter Orszag
The Office of Management and Budget
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Director Orszag:

We write to express support for significantly increased funding for the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) programs in the Fiscal Year 2011 budget. Funding for these vital programs has remained well below the authorized levels for many years, and the services CAPTA provides are needed now more than ever, as increases in reports of child maltreatment have been linked to the weakened state of our economy. We respectfully request your support for an increase for programs that strengthen innovative practices in child protective services and effective evidence-based and evidence-informed child abuse prevention programs.

According to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)' most recent data on child maltreatment, although there was a decrease in the number of substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect to 794,000 in 2007, child maltreatment-related deaths rose 15.5 percent between 2006 and 2007. In 2007, 1,760 American children, nearly three quarters of whom were under four years of age, died as a result of abuse or neglect. During that same year, child protective services (CPS) agencies received nearly 3.2 million reports of child maltreatment, and were only able to screen 62 percent of these reports for investigation. CPS workers' caseloads are often more than double the national recommended standard, and even higher in some areas. This is unacceptable, and our nation's child welfare system is stretched far beyond capacity. By increasing CAPTA funding, we can give our nation's children the prevention and treatment services they deserve.

CAPTA's Title I basic state grants are designed to help states strengthen their child protective systems. When measured by the federal Child and Family Service Reviews developed by HHS to evaluate a state's performance in protecting children, all states fell short. During these reviews, federal officials repeatedly cited states for deficiencies, including significant numbers of children suffering multiple incidences of abuse and/or neglect in the same six-month period, caseworkers not visiting at-risk children often enough to adequately assess their needs, and agencies not providing promised medical and mental health services to families. Increased CAPTA funding would enable state child protective services agencies to better protect children by expanding post-investigative services for victims of child maltreatment, shortening the time to delivery of such services, and increasing services to at-risk families.

Title II of CAPTA authorizes grants to states to help develop community-based prevention services to support families, including parenting education classes, home visiting services, respite care, as well as family resource centers to connect families and children to the services they need. Community prevention services to at-risk families are far less costly than the damage inflicted on children from abuse and neglect. Increasing funding for CAPTA prevention grants would help communities support proven, cost-effective approaches to preventing child abuse and neglect.

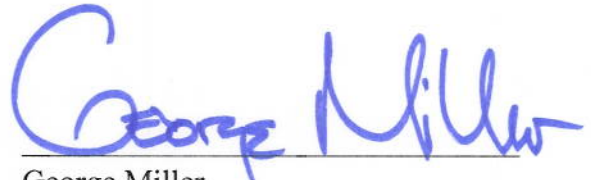
Finally, CAPTA's discretionary research and demonstration grants support efforts to develop innovative programs to serve children and families and to improve our knowledge about child maltreatment. Increased funding in these areas would provide support for field-initiated research, training, technical assistance, and data collection authorized by CAPTA.

In this difficult budget climate, the challenges your office faces are immense. However, it is time to invest additional resources to ensure that CAPTA is funded to allow our states and communities to receive the financial support they need to combat child maltreatment. Most importantly, this funding is necessary to provide our children and their families with the services and resources necessary to live healthy and productive lives. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Dodd". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath.

Christopher J. Dodd
Chairman, Children and Families Subcommittee
Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
Committee

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "George Miller". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath.

George Miller
Chairman, House Education and Labor
Committee