

NATIONAL CHILD ABUSE COALITION

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October 11, 2011

The Honorable Patty Murray
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Sen. Murray:

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 support from you and your colleagues on the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction in the development of a deficit reduction plan to preserve funding for essential programs serving vulnerable children and their families. Investing in healthy child development through evidence-based prevention and protection strategies is consistent with goals of ensuring our nation's future prosperity.

In particular, we request that you maintain current funding for the state grants, community-based prevention grants, and research grants supported by the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), the preventive and protective services funded by the Title IV-B(1) child welfare services, and the Title IV-B(2) program for Promoting Safe and Stable Families.

1. Spending on child protective services and on prevention programs supporting healthy child development has not contributed to the growth in the federal deficit. In fact, investing in prevention is less costly to society and individuals than trying to treat problems later. Prevent Child Abuse America estimates that implementing effective policies and strategies to prevent child abuse and neglect can save taxpayers \$104 billion per year. The cost of not doing so includes more than \$33 billion in direct costs for foster care services, hospitalization, mental health treatment, and law enforcement. Indirect costs of over \$70 billion include loss of productivity, as well as expenditures related to chronic health problems, special education, and the criminal justice system.
2. As the U.S. economy has worsened, increases in reports of child maltreatment have been linked to the weakened state of the economy. Funding to help states protect children and support families is critical. 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. A recent, five-year study published in the September 2011 issue of *Pediatrics* found that the rate of abusive head trauma (AHT) suffered by infants and young children in 74 counties in four states rose 65 percent during the recession compared to the rate in pre-recession years. In times of crisis, families need additional supports and services to prevent maltreatment from occurring.
3. States are hard pressed to treat children or protect them from further harm. Federal and state 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%) 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.

Thank you for your attention to our request. Your dedicated advocacy in support of programs to protect children and prevent child abuse and neglect helps to focus constructive public policies on these important issues. We hope we can count on your leadership to protect the resources needed to stem the tide of child maltreatment. 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. Again, many thanks for your advocacy on behalf of children.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Children and Families
American Humane Association
American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Child Welfare League of America
Every Child Matters Education Fund
Futures Without Violence
National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds
National Association of Counsel for Children
National CASA Association
National Center on Shared Leadership
National Coalition to End Child Abuse Deaths
National Coalition for Parent Advocacy in Child Protective Services
National Exchange Club Foundation
National Respite Coalition
Parents Anonymous
Prevent Child Abuse America
Stop It Now!
Strengthening All Across America
Voices for America's Children