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The Honorable Arlen Specter  
Chair, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services and Education  
Committee on Appropriations  
184 Senate Dirksen Office Building  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510-6034

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services and Education  
Committee on Appropriations  
184 Senate Dirksen Office Building  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510-6034

Dear Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member:

Your Subcommittee will soon consider Fiscal Year 2005 appropriations recommendations for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services and Education. On behalf of the American Bar Association, I am writing to urge your support for the President's request to increase funding for programs under the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) to \$42 million in FY05 for CAPTA basic state grants and \$66 million for CAPTA Title II community-based prevention grants. In addition, we urge funding for the CAPTA discretionary research and demonstration grants at the 2004 level of \$35 million.

We believe that federal funding to help states and communities protect children and prevent child abuse and neglect should be a congressional priority. Adequate funding is essential to getting the job done, but CAPTA funds have not kept pace with the scope of the problem. The President's budget request is a step in the right direction to increase CAPTA support to help states improve their child protective services and for community-based programs to prevent abuse and neglect.

Far too little attention in federal, state or local child welfare funding is directed at preventing harm to children from ever happening in the first place or providing the appropriate services needed by families and children victimized by abuse or neglect. Because our system is weighted toward protecting the most seriously injured children, intervention is not provided until a circumstance has become dire. While no one would argue that we should not help to protect the children who have been the most seriously injured, we can do better to protect children than to wait until the damage is so bad that we have no other choice. Increased funding for CAPTA's basic state grants and community-based prevention grants will help in a small though constructive way to begin to address that imbalance.

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According to the Department of Health and Human Services, the additional funds requested by the President for FY2005 will fund prevention services, including parenting education and home visiting for an additional 55,000 children and families. Additional funding for CAPTA state grants will shorten the time for the delivery of post-investigative services by 40 percent and increase the number of children receiving services by almost 20 percent. CAPTA funds have been virtually frozen for a decade. It is time to invest additional resources to work in partnership with the states to help families and prevent children from being abused and neglected.

Data issued by HHS show that substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect investigated by child protective service agencies in the United States numbered an estimated 903,000 children nationally in 2001. Unfortunately, many of the victims of child maltreatment get no attention to remediate the negative consequences of maltreatment. States report that the child victims or their families in close to half (42%) of the confirmed cases of child abuse receive no treatment or services after the investigation.

Fatalities from child maltreatment remain high: an estimated 1,300 children die of abuse or neglect each year. Children under 6 account for 84.5% of the child abuse fatalities, while 40.9% are under the age of one year at the time of death.

Our nation's child welfare system has long been stretched beyond capacity to handle the full scope of child maltreatment. Ninety percent of states report having difficulty in recruiting and retaining child welfare workers, because of low salaries, high caseloads, insufficient training and limited supervision. The turnover of child welfare workers is estimated to be between 30 and 40 percent annually nationwide. Caseloads for child welfare workers are double the recommended caseload, and obviously much higher in many jurisdictions.

Several impediments to solution of these problems remain:

- CAPTA should be the lead funding source for child protective services, yet current spending falls far short of sufficient support for services to protect children who have been abused or neglected.
- CAPTA should be the principal source of funding for community-based prevention programs, yet its resources are inadequate to ensure that families have access to the supportive services they need.
- CAPTA R&D dollars are inadequate to satisfy the demand. Even with current appropriations available for competitive grants, HHS is able to fund only one out of 8 applications for field-initiated research. Federal leadership funding is key to support research activities, especially since such funds are nonexistent at state and local levels.

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 support the President's budget request for CAPTA basic state grants and CAPTA community-based prevention grants and provide the resources needed to stem the tide of child maltreatment.

Sincerely,

Robert D. Evans

cc: Members of the Subcommittee