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June 7, 2004

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing on behalf of the American Bar Association to express our appreciation for your leadership in proposing in your Fiscal Year 2005 budget to increase funding for programs under the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), with \$42 million for CAPTA basic state grants and \$65 million for CAPTA Title II community-based prevention grants. We join with a broad range of organizations in support of your advocacy to Congress to include this important funding proposal in the FY05 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill.

The budget request is a much-needed step to increase CAPTA support to help states improve their child protective services and for community-based programs to prevent abuse and neglect. We believe federal funding to help states and communities protect children and prevent child abuse and neglect should be a high priority. CAPTA funds have not kept pace with the scope of the problem. Much more needs to be done. Adequate funding is essential to getting the job done.

In reviews conducted over the last three years, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has found that no state fully complies with federal standards on the safety and well being of children and other standards for assessing child welfare system policies and procedures. Federal officials have repeatedly cited states for certain deficiencies: significant numbers of children suffering abuse or neglect more than once in a six-month period; caseworkers not visiting children often enough to assess their needs; and states not ensuring necessary medical and mental health services. Many states said they did not have enough caseworkers to investigate reports of abuse or to monitor children in foster care. They have difficulty recruiting and retaining workers because salaries are often low. Officials in some states have told GAO that "insufficient funding and staff were among the greatest challenges."

Far too little attention in federal, state and local child welfare funding is directed at preventing harm to children from happening in the first place or providing the appropriate services needed by families and children victimized by abuse or neglect. 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.

According to HHS, the additional funds requested for FY2005 will support prevention services, including parenting education and home visiting for an additional 55,000 children and families. The CAPTA state grants, funded at \$42 million, a \$20 million increase, would enable state child protective service systems to 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. 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.

Your dedicated advocacy in support of these programs to protect children and prevent child abuse and neglect can help to focus a constructive response to these important issues in the FY 2005 appropriations legislation. Your continued leadership will help insure the resources needed to stem the tide of child maltreatment. We look forward to working with you and your staff in the coming months to secure your budget request for CAPTA basic state grants and CAPTA community-based prevention grants.

Again, many thanks for your advocacy on behalf of children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert D. Evans". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Robert D. Evans