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June 16, 2003

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:

We understand that the Subcommittee may soon consider Fiscal Year 2004 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 funding for the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) programs at the fully authorized levels in the CAPTA reauthorization bills passed this year by the House and Senate: \$80 million for the basic state grants, \$36 million for research and demonstration grants, and \$80 million for the Title II community-based family resource and support program's prevention grants.

We believe that federal funding to help states and communities protect children and prevent child abuse and neglect should be a high national priority. Adequate funding is essential to getting the job done, but CAPTA funds have not kept pace with the scope of the problem. Current appropriations for child abuse and neglect are only at 45 percent of these authorized amounts. In FY2003, basic state grants are at \$22 million, discretionary grants at \$34 million, and community-based prevention grants at \$33 million.

Much more needs to be done. According to the most recent data issued by HHS, substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect investigated by child protective service (CPS) agencies 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 neither the child victims nor their families receive any treatment or other kind of services following investigation of the report in nearly half (42%) of the confirmed cases of child abuse.

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.

- CAPTA should be the core funding for child protective services, yet it is not. Current spending in federal, state and local dollars for child protective services falls short by about \$2.5 billion of the estimated \$5.2 total cost of protective services in the United States. An appropriation of \$84 million for the basic state grants is a small step toward improving the situation for protective services.

- CAPTA should be the principal source of funding for community-based prevention programs, yet its resources are inadequate. Fully funding the community-based prevention program at \$80 million represents a modest commitment to support prevention of child abuse and neglect through CAPTA. The cost of preventive services if offered to the 3 million child maltreatment victims identified in the HHS National Incidence Study 3 would total \$9 billion, far more than the \$2.6 billion states report spending for child protection and prevention.

- CAPTA R&D dollars are inadequate to satisfy the demand. With only \$26 million available in 2003 for competitive grants out of a total \$34 million in CAPTA discretionary grant spending, HHS is able to fund only one out of eight applications for field-initiated research. Federal leadership funding is key to support for research activities, especially since such funds are nonexistent at the state and local levels. Raising the appropriation to \$36 million would help to advance the field's knowledge through support for research and program innovations.

Over the years, CAPTA funding has proven a small but important piece in the federal government's effort to help states and communities improve their practices aimed at preventing and treating child abuse and neglect. CAPTA programs support innovations in state child protective services and community-based preventive services, as well as research, training, data collection and program evaluation.

Your dedicated advocacy in support of programs to protect children and prevent child abuse and neglect helps to focus constructive public attention on these important issues. We urge you and the members of the Subcommittee to provide the resources needed to stem the tide of child maltreatment through CAPTA funding.

Sincerely,



Robert D. Evans

cc: Members of the Subcommittee

