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April 4, 2005

The Honorable Ralph Regula  
Chair, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services and Education  
Committee on Appropriations  
2358 Rayburn Building  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515-6024

The Honorable David R. Obey  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services and Education  
Committee on Appropriations  
2358 Rayburn Building  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515-6024

Dear Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member:

Your Subcommittee will soon consider Fiscal Year 2006 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 FY06 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 authorized 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. To date, insufficient funding has been allocated for the prevention of child maltreatment. Appropriate services for families and children who have been victimized by abuse and neglect are lacking. States report that 41 percent of confirmed victims of child maltreatment do not receive comprehensive treatment to remediate the negative consequences of abuse and neglect. More children who are already known to child welfare services are getting hurt again. In 2000, according to data from HHS, 29 percent of abused and neglected children were reported again to child protective services within six months. In 2002, that percentage increased to 38 percent.

Our nation's child welfare system is stretched beyond capacity to handle the full scope of child maltreatment. Ninety percent of states report difficulty in recruiting and retaining child welfare workers because of issues like low salaries, high caseloads, insufficient training and limited supervision. The average turnover of child welfare workers is between 30 and 40 percent annually. Nationally, the average caseload for child welfare workers is double the recommended size.

The most recent HHS data show that substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect investigated by child protective service agencies in the United States included an estimated 896,000 children nationally in 2002. Fatalities from child maltreatment remain high: an estimated 1,400 children die of abuse or neglect each year. The most endangered are the youngest. Children under four account for three-quarters of the child abuse fatalities, and 41 percent never reached their first birthdays.

According to the Department of Health and Human Services, the additional funds we are urging you to support 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. 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.

Preventing child abuse is cost effective. A GAO evaluation of child abuse prevention efforts found “total federal costs of providing prevention programs for low-income populations were nearly offset after four years.” Community prevention services to overburdened families are far less costly than the damage inflicted on children from abuse and neglect. A 2001 study calculated the total costs of child abuse to exceed \$94 billion annually, a figure that includes the immediate direct costs (such as law enforcement, medical treatment, and foster care) and long-term indirect costs (including juvenile delinquency, special education, and lost productivity).

In helping us understand how better to treat child maltreatment and prevent its occurrence, CAPTA R&D dollars are inadequate to satisfy the demand. With current appropriations available for competitive grants, HHS is only able to fund one out of eight applications for field-initiated research. Federal leadership is crucial to our ability to prevent and treat child abuse and neglect, and CAPTA funding is critically needed to support research activities, especially since such funds do not exist at state or 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 these modest increases for CAPTA basic state grants, community-based prevention grants and research and demonstration grants, thereby providing vital resources needed to stem the tide of child maltreatment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert D. Evans".

Robert D. Evans

Cc: Members of the Subcommittee