

July 15, 2009

The Honorable David R. Obey
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
H-218 Capitol
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515-6015

The Honorable Jerry Lewis
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
H-218 Capitol
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510-6034

Dear Mr. Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Lewis:

Your Committee will soon consider Fiscal Year 2010 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 funding for programs under the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) at the authorized levels of \$84 million in FY 2010 for CAPTA basic state grants and \$80 million for CAPTA Title II community-based prevention grants. In addition, we urge funding for the CAPTA discretionary research and demonstration grants at the level of \$37 million.

CAPTA funding helps states improve the child protective services infrastructure for screening, assessing and investigating each year more than 3 million reports of possible abuse and neglect of children. Although the most recent data, released this month by the Department of Health and Human Services, shows decrease in the number of substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect to 794,000 in 2007, child maltreatment-related deaths rose 15.5 percent in that same period. In 2007, 1,760 American children, nearly three quarters of whom were under four years of age, died as a result of abuse or neglect. During that same year, child protective services agencies received nearly 3.2 million reports of child maltreatment and were able to screen 62 percent of these reports for investigation. In short, our nation's child welfare system is stretched far beyond capacity. Only by fully funding CAPTA can we hope to give our children the prevention and treatment services they deserve.

CAPTA's Title I basic state grants are designed to help states strengthen their child protective systems. When measured against the federal Child and Family Service

Reviews developed by HHS to evaluate a state's performance in protecting children, all states fell short. During these reviews, federal officials repeatedly cited states for deficiencies, including significant numbers of children suffering multiple incidences of abuse or neglect in the same six-month period, caseworkers not visiting at-risk children often enough to adequately assess their needs, and agencies not providing promised medical and mental health services to families. Funding Title I at \$84 million would enable state child protective services agencies to better protect children by expanding post-investigative services for victims of child maltreatment, shortening the time to delivery of these services, and increasing services to at-risk families.

CAPTA's Title II authorizes grants to states to help develop community-based prevention services to support families, including parenting education classes, home visiting services, and respite care, as well as family resource centers to connect families and children to the services they need. While we spend billions of dollars every year on foster care to protect the children who have been the most seriously injured, we can do a much better job protecting children before the damage is so bad that we have no other choice than to remove them from their homes. Community prevention services to at-risk families are far less costly than the damage inflicted on children from abuse and neglect. Increasing for CAPTA prevention grants to \$80 million would help communities support proven, cost-effective approaches to preventing child abuse and neglect.

CAPTA's discretionary research and demonstration grants support efforts to develop innovative programs to serve children and families and to improve our knowledge about child maltreatment. To ensure the best service to families and at-risk children, we request increased funding of these grants. This funding is consistent with President Obama's proposal of \$10 million to support research- and evidence-based home visitation programs, and it would provide support for field-initiated research, training, technical assistance, and data collection authorized by CAPTA.

Your dedicated advocacy in support of programs to protect children and prevent child abuse and neglect helps to advance constructive public policies for these important issues. We hope the ABA can count on your leadership to support these increased funding levels for CAPTA basic state grants, community-based prevention grants and research and demonstration grants.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas M. Susman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Thomas M. Susman

Cc: Members of the Committee