

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro, Ranking Member Granger, and Ranking Member Cole:

As you consider the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Fiscal Year 2022 Appropriations bill, we write to express our support for a meaningful funding increase for the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA).

On March 16, the House passed H.R. 485, the Stronger Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, strong bipartisan cosponsorship. Recognizing the fundamental challenge of funding to strengthen CAPTA's impact, this bill would increase authorization levels for both Title I and Title II to \$270 million each, for a total of \$540 million. Since then, the COVID-19 pandemic has only highlighted the clear need for substantially increasing appropriations to improve outcomes and supports for children and families. The isolation and economic challenges presented by the pandemic underscore CAPTA's role in addressing the stresses families are facing over this past year.

Enacted in 1974, CAPTA is foundational to our child protection system, and includes important provisions to promote the full continuum of services aimed at keeping vulnerable children and their parents and families out of the foster care system. Unfortunately, CAPTA has been chronically under-resourced and, as a result, the law has not lived up to its potential. Substantial resources are necessary for states to implement the systems, protections, and community-based services that Congress has long envisioned in order to effectively prevent as well as treat child abuse and neglect.

A reformed and strengthened CAPTA is essential to providing important prevention and intervention services to prevent child maltreatment and the need for foster care. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the opioid crisis led to an increase in the number of children in foster care for five consecutive years. CAPTA is a critical lever in our federal efforts to address the impact of opioids and other substances on parents, children, and families. The virus has only added to challenges for families across the United States. We must increase resources to help stem the tide of children being removed from their homes and placed into foster care.

Title I of the law focuses on providing a social service response to parents, children, and families at risk and includes a number of important assurances that states must make aimed at keeping children safe and, where possible, keeping children safely with their parents and families. It can also provide funds to help states better addressing the need for equitable access to services that are in short supply in certain communities. The Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention grants (CB-CAP), included in Title II of CAPTA, are already helping to support community-based approaches to child abuse and neglect prevention in all fifty states. These grants are designed to meet the specific needs of individual communities and carried out by robust public-private partnerships that use federal funding to leverage greater state and local public and private funds.

Leading officials and experts have long recognized the importance of increasing resources for CAPTA. The Congressionally-commissioned National Commission to End Child Abuse and Neglect (CECANF) recognized the fundamental role CAPTA plays in our national system to support parents and families and keep children safe. In its 2016 report, the Commission recognized how CAPTA's chronic underfunding has compromised child safety and recommended that Congress authorize and appropriate at least \$1 billion to the base allotment for CAPTA to improve outcomes for children, parents, and families and prevent the need for foster care.

Federal leaders from across the political spectrum have in recent years emphasized the necessity of rethinking our approach to child maltreatment and investing in prevention rather than systems that react after a problem has already occurred. The isolation that families have felt during this pandemic emphasize

the need to change the focus from child welfare to primary prevention of maltreatment by helping families when they are under the greatest parental pressure brought on by circumstances beyond their control. We can only break the cycle of family disruption and maltreatment by addressing the root causes. Increasing appropriations for CAPTA offers us a crucial opportunity to do just that.

Last month, the House of Representatives acted to strengthen CAPTA with a major increase in authorization levels. We urge you to provide substantially increased resources to a reformed CAPTA to support a new vision of child welfare that truly supports families and effectively prevents child abuse and neglect. Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,

**Haley Stevens**

**Elise Stefanik**

**Frank Mrvan**

**Dusty Johnson**

Member of Congress

Member of Congress

Member of Congress

Member of Congress