

April 1, 2020

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education,
and Related Agencies
135 Dirksen Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education,
and Related Agencies
156 Dirksen Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

As organizations committed to promoting positive emotional development for our youngest children, we request that you fund the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Grant Program at a level of \$10 million. This groundbreaking mental health program benefits children who are at risk for mental health disorders or who have experienced trauma. As the leaders of the respective Subcommittees on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations in the Senate, you have always shown a strong commitment to caring for our nations' young children, especially those who are most in need. This was demonstrated in your decision to fund these new grants in Fiscal Years 2018 through 2020, decisions that were celebrated by mental health providers across the nation. We hope you will continue to support the foundational development that positive early mental health represents by increasing funding in this area, where it is desperately needed.

In the 114th Congress, the House and Senate recognized the importance of the mental health of young children and their families by passing the bipartisan Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act of 2016 as a part of the 21st Century Cures Act (P.L. 114-255). This important law includes the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Promotion, Intervention, and Treatment program (Sec. 10006) which creates grants that can leverage and improve critically important services in states and communities. First funded in Fiscal Year 2018, these grants are helping to change the course for children at risk for a mental illness and behavioral disorders and children who have experienced trauma. By investing in early mental health promotion, identification, and treatment, as well as training, coordination and integration among providers through evidence-informed approaches, we can promote positive emotional development from the start and reduce the need for treatment later in life, when it becomes much more difficult, time intensive, and expensive.

These grants have the potential to meet an immense need for infant and early childhood mental health treatment services around the country and fill serious gaps in the mental health workforce based on the needs of these localities. But funded at \$7 million, they are only currently reaching young children in a small number of states. By expanding the grants and directing resources where the foundations of strong mental health are laid – with young children, starting from birth- you are investing in the future stability and capacity of our nation.

For this reason, we urge you to increase funding for the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health grants in the Fiscal Year 2021 appropriations process, and in doing so invest directly in much needed services that will support young children, build the workforce, and strengthen communities and our country.

Sincerely,

ZERO TO THREE

Alabama Partnership for Children
Alaska Association for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health
Alliance for the Advancement of Infant Mental Health
American Academy of Pediatrics

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Muslim Health Professionals
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
Association for Infant Mental Health in Tennessee
Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs
Campaign for Trauma-Informed Policy and Practices
Children's Home Society of America
Children's Hospital Colorado
Clinical Social Work Association
Colorado Irving Harris Program in Child Development and Infant Mental Health
Connecticut Association for Infant Mental Health
Erikson Institute
Family Voices
First 5 Alabama
First3Years
Florida Association for Infant Mental Health
Florida State University
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
Hawaii Association for Infant Mental Health
Infancy Onward, Indiana Association for Infant Mental Health
Massachusetts Association for Infant Mental Health
Mental Health America
Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health
MomsRising
NAMI, National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
New Hampshire Association for Infant Mental Health
New Jersey Association for Infant Mental Health
New York State Association for Infant Mental Health
New York Zero-to-Three Network, Inc.
Nurse Family Partnership
Oklahoma Association for Infant Mental Health
Ounce of Prevention Fund
Rhode Island Association for Infant Mental Health
School Social Work Association of America
South Carolina Infant Mental Health Association
Southwest Human Development
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
The Yale Child Study Center
Tulane Institute for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health
United Way Worldwide
Virginia Association for Infant Mental Health
Voices for Virginia's Children
Washington Association for Infant Mental Health
West Virginia Infant/Toddler Mental Health Association
Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health