

March 29, 2019

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

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and
Related Agencies
1016 Longworth House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and
Related Agencies
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Blunt, Ranking Member Murray, Chairwoman DeLauro, and Ranking Member Cole:

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 \$20 million. This groundbreaking mental health program benefits children who are at risk for mental health disorders or who have been repeatedly exposed to trauma. As the leaders of the respective Subcommittees on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations in the House and 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 Year 2018 and continue funding in Fiscal Year 2019, 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 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 IECMH treatment services around the country and fill serious gaps in the mental health workforce. But funded at \$5 million, they are only currently reaching young children in eight 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 2020 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
Alliance for the Advancement of Infant Mental Health
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs
Boston Medical Center, Division of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics
Campaign for Trauma-Informed Policy and Practices
Child Trauma Research Center at University of California San Francisco
Clinical Social Worker Association
Collaborations for Growth
Connecticut Association for Infant Mental Health, Inc.
First Five Years Fund
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
Illinois Association for Infant Mental Health
The Jewish Federations of North America
Kansas Association for Infant Mental Health
Louisiana Infant Mental Health Association
Mental Health America
MomsRising
NAMI, National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association of 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 Hispanic Medical Association
National Register of Health Service Psychologists
New York Zero-to-Three Network, Inc.
Nurse Family Partnership
Ohio Association for Infant Mental Health
Ounce of Prevention Fund
School Social Work Association of America
Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine
Southwest Human Development
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
Trinity Health
Tulane Institute for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health
United Way Worldwide
Virginia Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics
Voices for Virginia's Children
Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health