



ZERO TO THREE
Early connections last a lifetime

March 21, 2020

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chair, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chair, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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

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

As appropriators work to put together the next response to the coronavirus pandemic, I want to highlight the needs of babies and families requiring urgent attention. Last week, ZERO TO THREE sent every Member of Congress 10 recommendations for action needed to safeguard the wellbeing of young children whose early development will be profoundly shaped by the current crisis. Now I am writing to particularly call your attention to requests that require emergency appropriations increases or new funding. We have refined some of these recommendations based on additional information from colleagues on the ground about the needs of young children and families. These requests include:

- **\$50 billion through the Child Care and Development Block Grant** in a form flexible enough to shore up the vast, myriad needs of the child care system vital to working families. This already fragile system is vulnerable to impacts of mass closures with a likelihood that many providers will never reopen. Yet, it is also considered an essential service needed for emergency workers, so the child care workers who care for their children will be at risk of their own health and in need of hazardous duty pay.
- **\$1 billion for Title II of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA)** to address our prime concern of isolated families under great stress with very young children at risk for abuse and neglect. The Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention grants offer an existing mechanism to quickly make help available in communities. Cases of abuse of young children as a result of parental stress are already in the news.
- **\$500 million in funds for CAPTA Title I State grants and \$1 billion for Title IV-B Part 2, of the Social Security Act:** Also known as the MaryLee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program, Title IV-B Part 2 is a flexible funding source that can support prevention, family preservation, and intervention services provided by state child welfare agencies, whose demands will undoubtedly increase as a result of this crisis. CAPTA state grants can help state child welfare systems cope with



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new challenges for protective services, including monitoring current caseloads amidst social distancing, preparing for new maltreatment cases due to increased levels of family stress, and finding creative solutions to getting families services.

- **\$200 million to address diaper need in low-income families** whose available cash for basic needs is severely restricted by the crisis. The inability to adequately address babies' diaper needs can lead to severe health problems that, in addition to making young children suffer, will increase hospital and emergency room visits, adding to the burdens on our health system.
- **\$100 million to augment infant-early childhood mental health services**, such as through the National Child Traumatic Stress Network and state agencies providing early childhood mental health consultation, to provide services to babies and families struggling to cope with the crisis, including telehealth services.
- **\$2 billion increase for Head Start and Early Head Start** to cover the costs of hazardous duty pay for staff in programs remaining open, additional cleaning supplies needed to keep programs that stay open sanitary, and of additional substitute teachers. Programs should be supported if they wish to continue offering comprehensive services to families even when closed. In addition, Congress should ensure that Head Start programs that have closed can reopen to serve children of emergency health and other workers, using their own highly qualified Head Start/Early Head Start teachers at a hazardous pay rate negotiated with the state, without charges of "double dipping."

For the 12 million infants and toddlers in the United States, this crisis occurs during a time when their rapid brain development means they are particularly affected by the rising stress of the adults who care for them. The decisions Congress is making today will help determine whether they have the strong foundation they'll need for future success—or whether that future is undermined by today's events.

Our original letter is included to provide greater detail. Thank you for thinking about babies and families as you undertake this critical work.

Sincerely,

Myra Jones-Taylor
Chief Policy Officer
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