



May 7, 2019

Chairman Bobby Scott  
House Committee on Education and Labor  
2176 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Virginia Foxx  
House Committee on Education and Labor  
2101 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Kim Schrier  
1123 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Representative James Comer  
1037 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Foxx, Representative Schrier, and Representative Comer:

On behalf of the National Child Abuse Coalition, thank you for your outstanding leadership on the *Stronger Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act*. The reforms and funding levels you have proposed in this legislation are extremely important, and we strongly encourage all members of the House Committee on Education and Labor to support its passage. If appropriately funded, this legislation will reduce child abuse and neglect, strengthen families through community-driven solutions, improve local responses to child trauma, increase states' child safety tools, and bring much improved data and transparency around abuse and neglect fatalities so that states can make tailored reforms to prevent future fatalities. Though some changes to the bill are still needed, we look forward to continuing to work with you as the legislation moves forward.

In particular, we strongly support the following elements of the proposal:

**Authorization levels.** Meaningful increases to CAPTA funding are essential to ensure this bill's important reforms will make children safer and families stronger. For too long, Congress has sought key improvements to this law but has failed to appropriate the funds that would allow states to successfully implement them. The Coalition believes at least \$500 million for each title is critical, but we recognize the authorization levels in this legislation reflect your strong commitment to keeping children from being harmed. We were very disappointed to learn that the House Labor-H bill released today does not reflect the important investments you have included in the *Stronger Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act*. We look forward to working with you to ensure the funding levels included in this legislation are executed in the appropriations process. The reforms this Committee envisions for CAPTA will not be realized without robust increases to funding.

**Emphasis on family strengthening.** We also applaud the bill's focus on family strengthening, a clear reflection of what we know to be true: that healthy and strong families are key to ensuring children are healthy and can achieve their full potential. The Stronger Child Abuse Prevention

and Treatment Act reflects the entire continuum of supports to families, starting with primary prevention at the heart of Title II and extending into the identification and treatment of abuse and neglect in Title I. All are essential to creating systems of support that both prevent child abuse and neglect and keep families together whenever possible, and also ensure timely and appropriate action when child abuse or neglect does occur.

**Improvements to child protection systems to reduce child fatalities and near fatalities from abuse and neglect.** Experts estimate nearly 3,000 children die every year from child abuse and neglect. Without proper data and disclosure, efforts to reduce these fatalities will not succeed. The legislation's reforms in Section 103 to develop uniform standards for tracking and reporting of child fatalities resulting from maltreatment are absolutely essential to making sure federal, state, and local governments have the information they need to keep more vulnerable children alive. The bill's reforms to clarify and strengthen disclosure about fatalities and near fatalities in Section 106 are also very important to these efforts. Both of these reforms were proposed by the Commission to Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities, a bipartisan Commission devised by Congress to put an end to these tragic child deaths. We also commend you for taking steps to improve interstate data exchange.

**Thoughtful attention to children and families impacted by substance use disorders.** As the national rise in substance use disorders continues to drive more children and families into the child welfare system, we appreciate the thoughtful attention paid by the Committee to these issues. In particular, the bill incorporates new language reflecting the intersection between child abuse and neglect and substance use disorders, the needs of children and families with substance use disorders, and how critical collaboration across multiple public and community partners is to effectively connect families to needed treatment services.

**Improved transparency, accountability, and focus on key priorities.** We greatly appreciate the legislation's much-needed streamlining and updating of CAPTA in ways that will prioritize key needs from the experts working in states and communities, and that will improve transparency and accountability to ensure better implementation of the law. The revisions to Sections 104 and 105 reflect a more focused approach to key priorities in child welfare. The use of funds in Section 106 presents a much more cohesive and coordinated vision to help states in their efforts to prevent, treat, and intervene in child abuse and neglect. The bill's revisions specifying the state mandates in Section 106 will bring much-needed improvements to CAPTA's transparency and accountability.

Finally, as the bill advances, we look forward to working with you so that the following provisions in Title II strike the right balance to ensure effective use of taxpayer dollars, reduce bureaucratic requirements for states, and reflect the importance of a universal, or public health, approach to primary prevention:

**Administrative cap.** Thank you for working with the Coalition and its members on this provision in between introduction and mark-up. We appreciate your willingness to respond to deep concerns from the states that the initial proposed cap would hinder states' ability to carry out the provisions of the legislation. CBCAP lead agencies are committed to running their programs efficiently, and most of them operate as part of larger agencies and do not always control what shared expenses are charged to them. We heard from numerous CBCAP lead

agencies that a four percent cap would greatly limit their ability to provide adequate oversight and support in implementing the bold vision that is proposed in the underlying legislation. As the legislation advances, we hope to work with you to ensure that the administrative cap is consistent with guidance from Office of Management and Budget related to federally negotiated indirect cost rates for federal funding, in a manner that does not undermine state flexibility to effectively implement the law.

**70/30 funding formula.** The Coalition urges Congress to simplify the Title II formula to be entirely population based. Currently, thirty percent of the funding formula is determined by a very complicated set of rules that burdens states with onerous bureaucracy, reduces state flexibility, produces accounting incentives that do not necessarily reflect state investments, and creates a situation where states that might benefit the most are the least able to leverage funds. As a result, just three states receive nearly one-third of the funding from this portion of the formula. We hope that you will continue to work with us to create a more appropriate formula for this Title.

**Public health approach.** As the Committee repeatedly heard from the witnesses at its March 26th hearing, a universal approach to primary prevention services is essential to the success of Title II. Primary prevention of child abuse is most effective when it takes a universal approach to building protective factors and reducing risks in families and communities. It is important that CAPTA strike the right balance between emphasizing building a universal – or public health - approach and targeting higher risk communities. We look forward to working with you to make sure the final law addresses this in the best manner possible.

Thank you for your commitment to the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect, and to improving the lives of children and families in the United States. The National Child Abuse Coalition and its twenty-five organizational members stand ready to continue to help support your efforts as the critical bill moves through Congress.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ruth J. Friedman".

Ruth J. Friedman, Ph.D.  
Executive Director  
National Child Abuse Coalition