Senator Charles Schumer

322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

July 15, 2020

Dear Senator Schumer:

On behalf of Prevent Child Abuse NY and the Healthy Families New York (HFNY) network of programs, I want to thank you for your leadership to address the needs of children and families during the COVID-19 pandemic. Healthy Families America, Prevent Child Abuse America’s evidence-based voluntary home visiting program, serves nearly 73,000 families each year with its approximately 600 sites in 38 states, Washington D.C., five U.S. Territories, and provides over 1 million yearly home visits.

**In New York, there are 44 HFNY programs throughout the State.** The HFNY home visiting program matches parents with knowledgeable and caring staff who provide information and support during pregnancy and early childhood. Services include helping families access community resources and services, educating families on parenting and child development, connecting families with medical providers, and assessing children for developmental delays. Home visiting programs change the lives of children and their families. Research shows HFNY works for many families, from first time teen parents to families with other children. Families have healthier babies, demonstrate better knowledge of parenting and child development, create positive family bonds, develop connections to community services, and have children who do better in school.

As the force of the pandemic hit New York State, HFNY needed to switch to virtual visits and their Central Administration had to swiftly identify ways to continue supporting its programs all across the State. With the pandemic ravaging our State, they had to draw on their strengths and continue to work in a true, relationship-based fashion and rapidly respond to an ever-shifting landscape of state and community needs and crises. **HFNY is very proud of all the work that has continued over the past challenging set of months; the collective efforts of programs and partners have helped HFNY to continue to provide crucial services as their value is more apparent than ever.**

Like nearly every sector of society right now, families served through the federal-state partnership, the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program are facing very serious challenges. Thanks to provisions in MIECHV, the country already has in place a community-based prevention and intervention services system that can help to mitigate family stress and keep children safe, as well as respond when children are put at risk.

MIECHV has widespread bipartisan support and builds upon decades of scientific research that show a positive return on investment to society and taxpayers through improved health, education, and employment outcomes, while reducing mental health costs, and dependence on welfare[[1]](#endnote-1).

MIECHV-funded programs have begun pivoting to accommodate new ways of reaching families, including expanding telehealth and virtual home visits, continuing to screen for interpersonal violence, substance use, developmental screening for children, and depression screening for caregivers, but are desperately in need of training, technology and support for these new measures and adaptations.

**We urge you to:**

* Prioritize a **one-time $100 million appropriation for MIECHV**. These funds can be used to train home visitors to deliver services through technology that enables home visits from a distance, as well as tangible needs for families including technology, formula, diapers, etc.
* **Allow virtual visits to be considered home visits** through the end of the calendar year to safely preserve valuable relationships without being penalized.
* **Maintain all funding for and staffing levels of MIECHV programs**regardless of potential temporary reductions in enrollment to preserve the existing home visiting infrastructure.

Providing funding through these **pre-existing systems** will help to ensure that federal money is deployed effectively and efficiently, assuring funding is getting to the programs already on the front lines that are best suited to meet the needs of children and families at this time. Home visitors are working with families struggling during this pandemic crisis to obtain basic items for their infants and young children such as diapers, milk, child care (for parents who are still working), income support (for those who have lost their job), and even transportation to get necessities.

In this current environment, families are experiencing greater stress and support from a trusted home visitor is crucial to family and child health and well-being. With public health at risk and the social safety net in higher demand, these professionals are working overtime to deliver services to families in an unprecedented environment and through creative means.

We greatly appreciate your attention to these critical needs and are hopeful that these items can be included in future stimulus legislation.  Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



Tim Hathaway, ED

1. Avellar, S., and Paulsell, D. (2011). Lessons Learned from the Home Visiting Evidence of Effectiveness Review Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Washington, DC. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)