

January 4, 2007

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Madam Speaker:

The convening of a new Congress provides another opportunity to support our communities, our neighborhoods and our families to encourage safe, healthy and nurturing environments for our nation's children. By doing this we all help to prevent child abuse and neglect. No one person, no one piece of legislation and no one appropriations bill can do this alone. It takes all of us and it requires the hard and deliberate work of many to make our beliefs and values a reality. As the newly elected Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, you are uniquely positioned to be a leader in the development of legislation and initiatives that make prevention a part of everything we do, rather than apart from the things we do.

Recently, over 6,500 individuals from across the country endorsed a petition from Prevent Child Abuse America stating:

*"We believe that the prevention of child abuse and neglect is a national priority. We believe that Congress should take a comprehensive approach to prevention that supports all parents and families so that they can provide healthy, safe and nurturing environments for children."*

Please make the prevention of child maltreatment a national priority. Specifically, I am asking you to support a **comprehensive** approach to prevention by striving to make prevention a part of every legislative decision you make.

How? By simply asking one of two questions about any legislation you develop, discuss or vote upon:

- How will this legislation affect the immediate and long term health, safety and future of America's children?
- Does the legislation provide funding for services for families and children already in crisis, and if so, what services or activities should have been accessible and available to reduce the need for the crisis services?

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**Mission Statement**

To prevent the abuse and neglect of our nation's children.



Understandably, many current public policies emphasize services for a child **after** the child has been abused or neglected. While we as a nation have an obligation to provide these important services, preventing child abuse and neglect from occurring in the first place makes more sense for our nation's children, our families and our local communities. Child maltreatment initiates a destructive domino effect beginning with the child and expanding into the broader society. Research indicates that maltreated children are at greater risk of experiencing:

- Poor school performance and an increased need for special education services;
- Increased incidence of juvenile delinquency and adult criminality;
- Increased incidence in later abuse or abusive behavior towards themselves and others; and,
- An increase in adverse health outcomes, including alcohol and other drug abuse, smoking, obesity, depression, sexual promiscuity and some chronic illnesses.

It is estimated that *\$94 billion dollars is spent each year* in out-of-home care, health, mental health, special education, juvenile justice, and adult corrections to address the results of child maltreatment on the individual.

Please use Prevent Child Abuse America as a resource and a partner to assist you to develop public policy that makes the prevention of child maltreatment a part of every legislative decision and provides an endowment for the future, rather than expenditures for the present.

Access to health care and social services, quality child care, parental employment, supportive relationships outside the family, economic development, juvenile justice services, special education programs, services for developmentally delayed children, escalation of Medicaid costs and adequate housing are just a few examples of public policies that can be viewed through the prevention lens.

The attached article, *Making "Cents" of Prevention*, provides more details on this broad vision for prevention. Please contact Bridget Gavaghan, Policy Analyst at Prevent Child Abuse America, at 312-334-6819 or at [bgavaghan@preventchildabuse.org](mailto:bgavaghan@preventchildabuse.org) to learn how we can be a resource for you as you provide stewardship for our nation's families.

Sincerely,



James M. Hmurovich  
President & CEO

