

March 4, 2008

The Honorable Kent Conrad
Chairman, Committee on Budget
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On behalf of Prevent Child Abuse America and our national network of 43 state chapters and over 400 Healthy Families America sites, I urge you to make the prevention of child abuse and neglect a priority in the FY 2009 Budget Resolution.

PCA America recently released an economic impact study that conservatively estimates the cost of child abuse and neglect to the United States at a startling **\$103.8 billion** each year. The report, ***Total Estimated Cost of Child Abuse and Neglect in the United States***, documents the pervasive and long-lasting effects of child abuse on children, their families, and society as a whole. The \$103.8 billion cost of child abuse and neglect includes more than \$33 billion in direct costs for foster care services, hospitalization, mental health treatment, and law enforcement. Indirect costs of over \$70 billion include loss of productivity, as well as expenditures related to chronic health problems, special education, and the criminal justice system.

The data in this report shows that a greater investment in prevention will decrease both the short and long-term costs to society. Please provide increased resources for Function 500 in the FY 2009 Budget Resolution to ensure that three essential federal sources of prevention dollars will be fully funded in FY 2009: Promoting Safe and Stable Families, the Social Services Block Grant, and the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act.

1. Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF):

PSSF grants help states pay for family support, family preservation, family reunification, and adoption support. Research is clear that investing in family support and family strengthening programs can lead to fewer incidences of child abuse and neglect. Unfortunately, Congress provided just \$63.3 million for the PSSF discretionary grant in FY 2008, \$25 million less than was provided the year before, and \$136.7 million short of the authorized level. We urge Congress to fully fund the PSSF discretionary grant at the authorized level of \$200 million in FY 2009. Funding the PSSF discretionary grant at \$200 million will promote the expansion of family support services in communities across the nation and provide more intensive help for families in crisis.

2. Social Services Block Grant (SSBG):

HHS reports that SSBG funded preventive services for 29 percent of the total child recipients of preventive services in 2005. Despite the many critical

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



services that SSBG makes possible, funding for the block grant has been chipped away over the past decade from a high of \$2.8 billion a year to its current authorized level of \$1.7 billion a year. The Administration's budget request for FY 2009 proposes to further cut SSBG by \$500 million and eliminate the block grant in FY 2010. If enacted, this 30 percent cut will result in the reduction or elimination of critical services and programs. We urge Congress to reject this cut and fully fund SSBG at \$1.7 billion in FY 2009.

3. The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA):

CAPTA embodies the federal commitment to prevent child maltreatment, but has not been funded adequately to meet the demand for community-based prevention programs. In FY 2009, we urge Congress to fund CAPTA programs at the following fully authorized levels:

- \$84 million for CAPTA state grants, which provide funds for states to improve child protective services;
- \$65 million for CAPTA community-based grants, which help states develop and implement effective approaches to prevent child abuse and neglect; and
- \$36 million for CAPTA discretionary research and demonstration grants. Within this funding amount, we ask Congress to approve the President's proposed \$10 million to support a broad range of evidence-based home visitation services, as Congress did last year.

If you have any further questions or require additional information, please contact Bridget Gavaghan, Director of Public Policy, at 312-334-6819, bgavaghan@preventchildabuse.org.

Sincerely,



James M. Hmurovich
President & CEO

