

Press Release

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Congressional Hearing to Spotlight Early Childhood Home Visitation Legislation *Bill is Prevent Child Abuse America's Top Legislative Priority*

CHICAGO, IL - June 10, 2008 - This week, the Education and Labor Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives is planning to hold a hearing on legislation that would provide much needed funding to early childhood home visitation services.

Early childhood home visitation provides a voluntary and direct service in which home visitors can help parents: understand, recognize and promote age appropriate developmental activities for children; meet the emotional and practical needs of families; and improve the manner in which parents achieve better outcomes for their children. Making quality home visitation programs more widely available in all communities is one of Prevent Child Abuse America's top priorities.

The hearing, scheduled for 10am ET, Wednesday, June 11th, will focus on the Education Begins at Home Act (EBAH, HR 2343). This bipartisan legislation, introduced by Representatives Danny Davis (D-IL-7) and Todd Platts (R-PA-19), authorizes \$500 million over three years to help states establish or expand quality early childhood home visitation programs.

"Our nation is recognized for meeting any challenges brought before us, our communities, and our workforce, but our continued position of leadership is greatly impacted by how we raise our children today," said Jim Hmurovich, President & CEO of Prevent Child Abuse America. "Home visitation programs, like our own Healthy Families America program, are exceptionally well-positioned to enhance our nation's ability to foster healthy childhood development and are worthy of the investment proposed by EBAH."

Research has shown that voluntary home visitation is an effective and cost-efficient strategy for supporting new parents and connecting them to helpful community resources. Quality early childhood home visitation programs lead to proven, positive outcomes for children and families, including improved child health and development, improved parenting practices, improved school readiness, and reductions in child abuse and neglect. Despite the evidence of success, home visitation services struggle with unreliable and unsustainable funding.

"The 41 families we are able to serve represent only a drop in the bucket compared to the number of children living in our community," said Makeda London, Program Manager for the Healthy Families program serving Chicago's Near North neighborhood. "The investment in our community that EBAH would provide would allow us to serve more families and increase our ability to prevent child abuse and neglect."

Ms. London is scheduled to testify at the hearing on the bill's behalf.

The Education Begins at Home Act would provide states with \$400 million over three years to:



- Provide eligible families with voluntary early childhood home visitation on at least a monthly basis;
- Offer annual health, vision, hearing and development screening for eligible children;
- Provide referrals for eligible families, as needed, to additional resources;
- Offer group meetings to further enhance the information and skill-building addressed during home visits;
- Provide training and technical assistance to early childhood home visitation staff and early childhood care and education staff;
- Coordinate various models of early childhood home visitation, early childhood education and care, and early intervention to ensure families are receiving the most appropriate and effective services to meet their needs.

In addition to the \$400 million in state grants, EBAH would authorize \$50 million over 3 years in competitive grants to reach military families, and \$50 million over 3 years in competitive grants to reach families with English Language Learners

“While no one piece of legislation can prevent child abuse and neglect,” said Hmurovich, “EBAH is an important step towards ensuring that all children have the opportunity to grow up in a stable, healthy, and nurturing environment.”

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ABOUT PREVENT CHILD ABUSE AMERICA

Prevent Child Abuse America, founded in Chicago in 1972 is the nation’s leading organization working solely to prevent the abuse and neglect of our nation’s children. Through its chapters in 44 states and its voluntary home visitation services provided by Healthy Families America® in more than 400 communities nationwide, Prevent Child Abuse America helps provide healthy, stable and nurturing experiences for more than 100,000 families every year. For more information, please visit www.preventchildabuse.org and www.healthyfamiliesamerica.org.

