

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 12, 2019

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Chairman  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee  
on Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education & Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education & Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

As you consider the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Fiscal Year 2020 Appropriations bill, we write to express our support for robust funding for the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA).

Enacted in 1974, CAPTA is foundational to our child protection system, and includes important provisions to promote the full continuum of services aimed at keeping vulnerable children and their parents and families out of the foster care system. Unfortunately, CAPTA has been chronically under-resourced and, as a result, the law has not lived up to its potential. Substantial resources are necessary for states to implement the systems, protections, and community-based services that Congress has long envisioned in order to effectively prevent as well as treat child abuse and neglect.

Properly funding CAPTA is essential to reducing the rates of child abuse and neglect in this country. Largely due to the opioid crisis, the number of children in foster care has risen for five consecutive years, and parental substance abuse that leads to the removal of a child is rising faster than any other reason for removal. CAPTA is a critical lever in our federal efforts to address the impact of opioids and other substances on parents, children, and families. Therefore, we must provide sufficient resources to help stem the tide of children being removed from their homes and placed into foster care.

Title I of the law focuses on providing a social service response to parents, children, and families at risk and includes a number of important assurances that states must make aimed at keeping children safe and, where possible, keeping children safely with their parents and families. However, Title I CAPTA state grants are funded at \$85 million, which is below the 2010 authorized level of \$120 million and does not provide states with the resources they need to prevent child abuse and neglect and provide treatment.

The Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention grants (CB-CAP), included in Title II of CAPTA, are already helping to support community-based approaches to child abuse and neglect prevention in all fifty states. These grants are designed to meet the specific needs of individual

communities and carried out by robust public-private partnerships that use federal funding to leverage greater state and local public and private funds. Title II CB-CAP, however, is funded at \$39.8 million, which is below its 2010 authorization of \$80 million and limits states and local communities in supporting the many different family strengthening services that reduce incidences of child abuse and neglect. Both authorizations targets are now a decade old.

Leading officials and experts have long recognized the importance of sufficient resources for CAPTA. The Congressionally-commissioned National Commission to End Child Abuse and Neglect (CECANF) recognized the fundamental role CAPTA plays in our national system to support parents and families and keep children safe. In its 2016 report, the Commission recognized that underfunding CAPTA can have a negative impact on child safety and recommended that Congress enact reforms and dedicate the resources necessary to improve outcomes for children, parents, and families and prevent the need for foster care.

Jerry Milner, Commissioner of the Children's Bureau, has also acknowledged the necessity of rethinking our approach to child maltreatment, and investing in prevention rather than systems that react after a problem has already occurred. In his words: "We need to change the focus on child welfare to primary prevention of maltreatment and unnecessary removal of children from their families. We can only break the cycle of family disruption and maltreatment by addressing the root causes of those situations." Increasing appropriations for CAPTA offers us a crucial opportunity to do just that.

We urge you to provide appropriate and robust resources to CAPTA to support a new vision of child welfare that truly supports families and effectively prevents child abuse and neglect. Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,



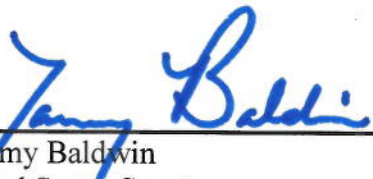
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Doug Jones  
United States Senator



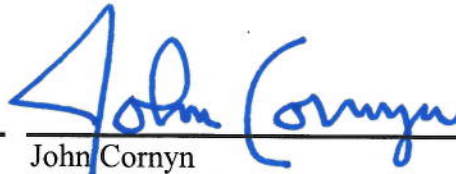
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Johnny Isakson  
United States Senator



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Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



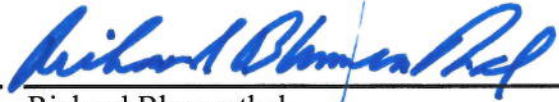
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John Cornyn  
United States Senator





Kyrsten Sinema  
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



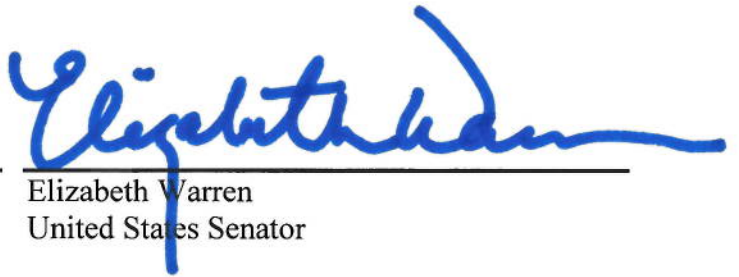
Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet  
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Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



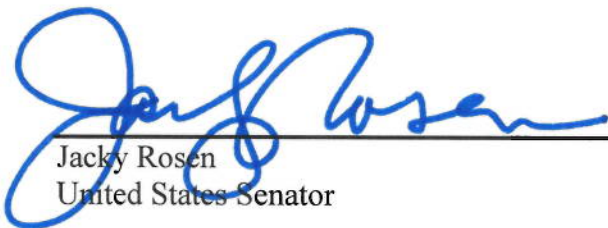
Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



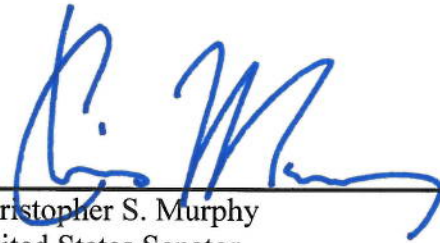
Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



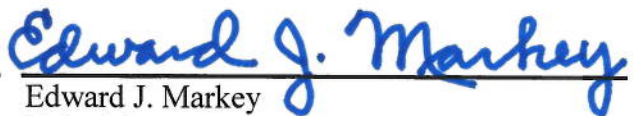
Jacky Rosen  
United States Senator



Christopher S. Murphy  
United States Senator





Kamala D. Harris  
United States Senator





Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

  
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Jon Tester  
United States Senator


  
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Kirsten Gillibrand  
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Tina Smith  
United States Senator


  
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Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
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Maria Cantwell  
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Robert Menendez  
United States Senator

  
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Debbie Stabenow  
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