Prevent Child Abuse America® advocates for policies and services that strengthen families, promote healthy child development, and prevent child abuse and neglect before it occurs. We support services that improve child well-being through our extensive network of chapters in nearly 50 states and nearly 600 Healthy Families America® evidence-based home visiting program sites.

In the United States, at least 1 in 7 children experience child abuse and/or neglect annually. Studies show that the total lifetime economic burden associated with treating the consequences of child maltreatment is approximately $2 trillion. Exposure to violence or other adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are linked to chronic health problems, mental illness, and substance misuse in adulthood. However, ACEs can be prevented. Doing so could reduce up to 21 million cases of depression and 1.9 million cases of heart disease. There is also an estimated cost-benefit ratio of approximately $7 for every $1 invested in high-quality early childhood experiences for at-risk children. Prevention remains the most cost-effective approach to minimizing the impact of ACEs.

If we are to achieve our prevention aims, Prevent Child Abuse America recommends Congress take the following actions in 2020:

**Reauthorize and increase funding for the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) to $540 million annually, appropriating $270 million for both Title I and Title II**

We urge Congress to restructure CAPTA to provide a stronger focus on prevention strategies, better align to current best practices, and support a system that empowers families and communities by providing the tools and resources necessary for a healthy, safe home. This work includes voluntary evidence-based home visiting programs, community-based parent support programs, early childhood and child care programs, family resources centers, and connection with mental health and substance use services, among others. Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention grants represent the main federal investment in primary prevention for the entire country, however, they are funded at $55.6 million for all 50 states. In 2019, this funded prevention at only 53 cents per child per year. Some states receive as little as $85,000 annually in state grants—not enough to properly meet nearly two-dozen state grant requirements. Increased funding will allow for greater service delivery to address the needs of vulnerable families and facilitate robust systems building at the state and community levels.

**Double funding for the Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program**

We urge Congress to double funding for the MIECHV program from $400 million to $800 million annually by 2022 and increase tribal set-aside funding from 3% to 6% to serve more children and families in need and address maternal mortality and morbidity. The MIECHV program, the cornerstone of evidence-based public policy with wide bipartisan support, is a federal-state partnership that provides evidence-based home visiting services, like Healthy Families America, in all 50 states. The program builds upon decades of scientific research that show improved health, education, and employment outcomes, while reducing mental health, special education and criminal justice costs, dependence on welfare, and involvement with child protective services. Currently, however, MIECHV reaches only an estimated 3% of families in need.
Reduce Adverse Childhood Experiences by funding the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at $10 million for child sexual abuse prevention and $33 million for the Essentials for Childhood framework

We request $33 million for the Essentials for Childhood framework to expand from seven funded states to all 50 states. The CDC’s Essentials for Childhood evidence-based federal initiative promotes the positive development of children and families and the prevention of all forms of child abuse and neglect. The collective impact approach is particularly appropriate for solving complex social problems that no single organization or sector can solve alone. This includes identifying and convening key stakeholders from different sectors, including business and media, and entails alignment, coordination, identification of and filling critical gaps, and metrics to track the progress and implementation of evidence-based programs.

We request $10 million to expand research for the development, evaluation, and dissemination of child sexual abuse prevention practices. Federal investment in child sexual abuse prevention is needed to develop and validate programs and policies. As many as 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 13 boys experience this type of serious adverse childhood experience. A recent study found victims will incur an estimated cost of nearly $9.3 billion across their lifetime to treat the associated consequences of abuse. A congressionally mandated report, released in December 2019 by the CDC, outlined major gaps in current research efforts.

Support implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First)

We will offer guidance, technical assistance, and peer-to-peer support to assist states in learning from each other on how to best address successes and challenges in the implementation of Family First, sharing this information with Congress. We will advocate for further federal guidance and support on requirements for states to claim available prevention funding for programs and services that promote healthy outcomes for children and families. Family First is a historic law that provides flexibility for child welfare programming to use federal Title IV-E funds before children enter the foster care system on important services such as mental health, substance use, counseling, and in-home parent skill-based programs.

Monitor pertinent policy and appropriations issues

We will engage in collaborative advocacy with an extensive network of allied organizations to ensure federal policies and funding prioritize prevention to strengthen families and child well-being, including the Child Care and Development Block Grant, Social Services Block Grant, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Medicaid policy, paid family leave, and the earned income tax credits, among others.

We have an extraordinary opportunity to contribute to a prosperous future for our nation by giving children in every state the fundamental tools for future success.

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