

California Congressional Delegation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

May 5, 2020

RE: Letter of Support from California entities for emergency funding to support prevention and stabilization of families

Dear Members of the California Congressional Delegation,

As California organizations working to ensure the wellbeing of our children and families, we urge you to ensure Congress includes in the next COVID-19 response package funds to strengthen the state and local systems that prevent and respond to child abuse and neglect and that address the needs of children, youth, and families already in the foster care system.

Toxic stress is a major health problem, and the impacts of COVID-19 are putting significant new stressors on families who were already facing major adversity in California. As families attempt to navigate new public health safety protocols, school closures, uncertain childcare arrangements, job losses, social isolation, and significant barriers to many critical support services, they have little resilience to call upon to manage these new challenges. We know that these kinds of hardships increase the risk and occurrence of child abuse and neglect, and require a variety of supports and resources in response. That's why the undersigned California organizations joined the hundreds of other national, state, and local organizations in urging Congress to act swiftly to provide emergency funding to ensure entities supporting families and keeping children safe can meet the increased demand for their services.

California's families have been hit hard by COVID-19. Our state was the first to impose sheltering in place, and families have lost loved ones, jobs, income, homes, connections, and are experiencing drastic levels of stress. People and communities of color are impacted disproportionately, widening even more the gap between those with resources and those without. In addition to COVID-19, California is already having to prepare for wildfire season, and families still trying to recover from the 2017 fires and now in the middle of a battle with COVID-19 will have to manage the stress of another wildfire season with already too few resources. As a result of this pandemic, the number, duration and severity of the adverse experiences children are accumulating, and unless they are mitigated by the protective factors, concrete supports and services that entities like those listed here provide, Californians face multiple generations of negative health, social and economic impacts. As the fifth largest economy in the world, the future of Californians is part of the future of a healthy America.

We already have disturbing California data about the impact of COVID-19 on our child well-being safety net. California relies on an informal network of family resource centers, centers for early childhood, local crisis and warm lines, and case managers at many disparate entities to connect families in need to the resources they need to be resilient. Statewide data indicate that without immediate and responsive support, as many as 50% of that safety network will not be there 12 months from now. Mental health supports, already severely inadequate in California, are expected to be reduced by as much as 50%.

There has been an increase of 41% in demand for family resource center services. As sheltering in place is gradually withdrawn and those centers can again open their doors, that demand is expected to increase even more as for many communities FRCs are where families go first to access emergency resources. The pandemic has created an unprecedented level of demand at California food banks—seeing a year-over-year increase in demand of approximately 73%. In the first three weeks of April, CalFresh saw a 140% increase in the number of applications over the same time last year. Although parents are under more stress than ever, reports of child abuse and neglect have fallen by as much as 50% in some counties as children are isolated at home and no longer under the protective eyes of schools.

To directly and concretely address these challenges and support vulnerable children and families, we urge Congress to provide dedicated funding to state and local governments and organizations. We already have the systems with trained and trusted professionals working hard every day, but states and their local partners need emergency money to continue operations, adapt to current challenges, and meet the increased need through innovation and responsiveness to community input. We urge you to provide emergency funding for the following programs:

- **\$1 billion for Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) Grants.** This funding would help states and local organizations better meet the increased need for child abuse prevention programs and adapt services to account for social distancing.
- **\$20 million for Kinship Navigator Programs.** This funding would help respond to the skyrocketing demand for information and connections to resources among families where grandparents and other relatives are raising children.
- **\$1 billion for Title IV-B Part 2.** This funding would help child welfare agencies provide the services necessary to stabilize families, support family preservation efforts, and prevent a major influx of children into the foster care system.
- **\$500 million for CAPTA Title I.** These flexible funds would help ensure child welfare agencies' response, investigations, and interventions of child abuse and neglect are not dangerously upended.
- **\$30 million for the Court Improvement Program.** This funding would help address child welfare court shutdowns, reduced staffing, technological challenges and other issues that are compromising child safety and delaying family reunification.
- **Increase FMAP for Title IV-E, Including the Family First Prevention Program.** FMAP for Title IV-E foster care should be raised commensurate with any increase to Medicaid FMAP and should be applied to the new Title IV-E Prevention Services program. The prevention funding will help make affordable mental health and substance disorder

services and other interventions that support family stabilization and keep children safe but out of foster care.

- **Increase funding to Title IV-E Chafee funds by \$500 million.** This funding would allow states to ensure a flexible, rapid response to the emerging needs of young people in the transition from foster care to adulthood.

Furthermore, increases to the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) are needed to help states fill in gaps to critical services including early childhood mental health, child protective services, child abuse prevention supports, domestic violence services, and foster care.

Respectfully,

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| Windsor Wellness Partnership | Foster Care Counts |
| West Fresno Family Resource Center | Foster America |
| Urban Services YMCA | First 5 Tehama |
| Uplift Family Services | First 5 Sonoma |
| The Children's Network of Solano County | First 5 Siskiyou |
| SOS Counseling | First 5 Shasta |
| Shafter Healthy Start | First 5 Napa |
| Seneca Family of Agencies | First 5 Modoc |
| Santa Ynez Valley People Helping People | First 5 Del Norte |
| Santa Barbara Child Abuse Prevention Council | First 5 Contra Costa |
| Safe & Sound | First 5 Butte |
| S.H. Cowell Foundation | First 5 Association |
| Rock Results | Edgewood |
| RaiseAChild | Community Action Commission of Santa Barbara County |
| Public Counsel | Children's Bureau of Southern California |
| Prevent Child Abuse California | Children and Family Futures |
| Paternal Opportunities Programs & Services, Inc. | Child Parent Institute |
| Pasadena/Altadena Coalition of Transformative Leaders | Child Abuse Prevention Council, Sacramento |
| Parent Resource Center | Child Abuse Prevention Center |
| Our Family Coalition | Center for Youth Wellness |
| McKinleyville Family Resource Center | Carpinteria Children's Project |
| Maryvale | California Family Resource Association |
| Lotus Bloom Family Resource Center | California Children's Trust |
| Lincoln | CA American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children |
| John Burton Advocates for Youth | California Alliance of Child and Family Services |
| HOPE Family Resource Centers | Association of Community Human Service Agencies. |
| Hillsides | Aspiranet |
| Head Start California | Alliance for Children's Rights |
| Gravenstein Health Action Network | Advokids |