

Group Sign-on letter for FY20 CAPTA Appropriations

May __, 2019

Dear Chairman Blunt, Ranking Member Murray, Chairwoman DeLauro, and Ranking Member Cole:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we are writing to request substantial increases in federal funding for the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) – specifically, \$500 million for Title I and \$500 million for Title II. These programs are critical to our nation’s efforts to prevent and treat child abuse and neglect, strengthen families and communities, and prevent future generations of system-involved children and families.

Congress is expected to pass key reforms to CAPTA this year as part of a reauthorization effort. But the reforms Congress envisions for CAPTA simply will not be realized without robust funding increases to Titles I and II. For too long, Congress has sought key improvements to this law but has failed to appropriate the funds that would allow states to successfully implement them. The House Committee on Education and Labor recently passed a reauthorization of CAPTA unanimously, with strong bipartisan support. The Committee recognized that a much larger investment is needed to ensure these systems and programs work.

The national substance abuse crisis, which continues to place pressure on our public systems and push more children into foster care, only increases the sense of urgency for these resources. We thank you for the FY18 and FY19 CAPTA funding that ensured infants with prenatal substance exposure and their families are connected to needed treatment services. However, even with this increase, current federal resources in child welfare overwhelmingly support “back-end” services that support children *after* they are removed from their families and placed into foster care. Even though the Family First Prevention Services Act took vital steps to support more prevention services, these services will be available only to children who are at “imminent risk” of entering foster care and their families – in other words, *after* they come to the attention of child protective services and *after* families are already in a deep crisis. States receive very little support from the federal government for effective prevention and intervention, and Title I and Title II are central to any effort to helping children *before* they are harmed

Robust funding for CAPTA will strengthen state and local systems aimed at empowering families and communities so they can provide healthy, safe homes for their children – ensuring that foster care is a system of last resort. Research supports this approach: when families are given timely access to appropriate services and supports, many children can remain safely with their parents – minimizing trauma to children, improving outcomes for all family members, and giving their families hope for a healthy future.

We urge you to consider increased funding for CAPTA as follows:

CAPTA Title I Grants

CAPTA state grants include a range of requirements related to states’ child protection systems, including important provisions to support child abuse prevention and keep families together when possible – reflecting the entire continuum of supports to families from prevention to early

identification to treatment. These requirements are essential to promoting child and family well-being, including for families impacted by substance use disorders. Title I also includes an important funding stream for child abuse and neglect research and for testing innovative programs. Increasing these investments is critical to helping ensure efforts to reduce child abuse and neglect are effective and efficient. Title I currently receives less than \$100 million annually, and it does not come close to providing states the resources they need to prevent child abuse and neglect and provide treatment where needed.

Substantial resources for Title I are necessary for states to implement the systems and protections Congress has long mandated through this law. This is why the Congressionally-commissioned National Commission to End Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities (CECANF) recognized the fundamental role CAPTA plays in our national system to support families and keep children safe and how its chronic underfunding has compromised safety. In 2016, the Commission recommended CAPTA Title I appropriations increase to \$1 billion each year.

We request funding CAPTA Title I at \$500 million.

Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CB-CAP) Grants (Title II)

Title II of CAPTA is unique in that it is already focused on efforts that support families and prevent child and abuse before it occurs – supporting states and community-driven solutions that strengthen families to be strong and successful, so they never come to the attention of the child welfare system. The grants, which leverage local and private dollars, allow states to support evidence-based programs tailored to unique local needs and the needs of vulnerable children and families. This dedicated prevention funding allows states to invest in true primary and secondary prevention services for families, and its programs have been shown to improve child and family well-being and reduce future public costs. Title II currently receives less than \$50 million annually, which does not allow states and local communities to support the many different family strengthening services that we know can reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect.

We request funding CAPTA Title II CB-CAP grants at \$500 million.

Thank you for your consideration of our requests. For more information about these requests, please contact Ruth Friedman, Executive Director of the National Child Abuse Coalition, at nationalchildabusecoalition@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

[List of organizations]