

June 3, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker, House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Republican Leader
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy,

On behalf of the Child Trauma and ACEs Policy (CTAP) Working Group, a coalition of more than 30 national organizations committed to preventing childhood trauma and helping children experiencing severe adversity heal and thrive, we thank you for what you have done so far in responding to the needs of children affected by COVID-19. As the pandemic continues, we ask that you now invest resources to prevent and mitigate the lifelong effects of the trauma that many children are experiencing, while also addressing the disproportionate impact the virus is having on some families and communities. This is seen quite clearly in low-income communities of color throughout our country, who are not only much more likely to die from COVID-19, but also already suffer serious effects of trauma and experience severe adversity. We also ask that you give those working with children and youth the tools they need to navigate the trauma they and the children and families they work with are experiencing. By supporting programs that embed trauma-informed practices into already existing programs, we will build the capacity of communities and schools to meet the current needs of children and prevent the potentially devastating consequences of unaddressed trauma.

You have received many letters from multiple coalitions that work to meet the needs of children. We are supportive of many of the asks already put forward by other coalitions, such as those addressing child abuse prevention, early childhood, home visitation and MIECHV, child care, domestic violence, foster care, after school and other out of school programs, as well as those addressing the needs of older youth. By highlighting the programs below, we hope to add our support to those requests, and we also recommend language be inserted into any new programs for children making funds available to provide trauma-informed care.

As you address FY' 21 funding and COVID response legislation, please consider:

1. *Helping Early Childhood, Child Abuse Prevention and Child Care Programs Address COVID-19*

CTAP urges the inclusion of Supporting Students in Response to Coronavirus Act (S. 3489/H.R. 6275) and its authorized funding in any future legislative package. This bicameral legislation would authorize grants to states and agencies that administer Child Care Development block grants and Head Start agencies to coordinate response efforts with public health departments, purchase cleaning equipment, provide mental health services and supports to children and students, and address unexpected expenses related to basic needs of enrolled students.

In addition, CTAP supports integrating trauma training and response into existing home visiting and Head Start programs, and asks the Senate to include the \$100 million for the Maternal, Infant, Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV) that was included in the House HEROES bill (H.R. 6800).

CTAP also strongly supports the funding for community-based child abuse prevention programs included in the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act.

2. *Mental Health Services for Children and Students*

We recommend several funding and policy changes focused on mental health services for children.

- We suggest providing \$250 million set aside within existing afterschool and school-age childcare funding to allow for trauma-informed virtual and online care training and programs. It would include additional staffing to programs in high-risk communities to provide individualized care to children and teens expressing disruptive and challenging behaviors.
- We ask for continued support for SAMHSA's Project AWARE that would address the mental health needs of students associated with trauma caused by COVID and extended school closures. The House included \$100 million for this program in the HEROES Act and we would ask the Senate to include a similar amount.
- Additionally, we ask for the inclusion of the Mental Health Services for Students Act (S.1122/H.R. 1109) that would expand the scope of the AWARE program to provide more students with the benefits of mental health care, and also ask for an emergency open enrollment period.
- P.L. 115-271 (The SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act) created new grants to expand evidence-based trauma support services in schools. The law authorizes the Secretary of Education, in coordination with the Assistant Secretary of Mental Health and Substance Use, to make grants to link educational agencies with mental health systems to increase student access to services. We urge you to include \$50 million for these grants to help mitigate the impact of trauma that many of our students are enduring as a result of the pandemic.
- Include 'trauma-informed care professional development for teachers and school staff' as an eligible use of supplemental funds for SEAs and LEAs under future appropriations through the 'Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund' established by the CARES Act (PL 116-136), or the 'State Fiscal Stabilization Fund' proposed in the HEROES Act (HR 6800).
- Finally, we join others in supporting an increase to the Mental Health Block Grant with a 15% set aside for crisis response services.

3. *Resilience Investment, Support, and Expansion (RISE) from Trauma Act*

We urge Congress to include the RISE from Trauma Act (S. 1770/H.R. 3180) in any future legislative package. This bipartisan, bicameral bill would improve community responses and local coordination, ensure equitable mental health benefits for children and youth, streamline trauma funding, and codify the Children Exposed to Violence Initiative at the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

4. *Workforce Training and Supports for Youth*

CTAP asks Congress to include additional funding to the Department of Labor in coordination with HHS to support an integration of trauma-informed approaches into youth workforce programs with the purpose of improving youth job placement and retention ratio. These funds would be *in addition to* an increased investment in federal youth workforce programs to support youth who have been hit particularly hard by the economic losses and lost educational and work opportunities associated with the virus.

In addition, we want to highlight the need for designated funding to go to Tribes who are also disproportionately impacted by the health and economic consequences of the virus.

5. Federal Coordination

The prevalence of child trauma related to the COVID-19 pandemic will require a coordinated federal response. Section 7132 of P.L. 115-271 (SUPPORT Act) created an Interagency Task Force on Trauma-Informed Care that was directed to identify, evaluate, and make recommendations around the most effective programs and ways in which Federal agencies can better coordinate to improve the Federal response to families impacted by substance use disorders and other forms of trauma. With additional federal resources, including many flexible funding streams, flowing into states and communities, the work of the Task Force is more important than ever. We urge you to provide \$1 million to support the task force.

6. National Childhood Traumatic Stress Network

CTAP supports the work of the National Child Traumatic Stress Network. The House included an additional \$10 million for NCTSN in the HEROES Act. We would ask the Senate to continue funding for the NCTSN.

Our country has faced unexpected tragedies before, but few, if any, have been so far reaching and touched so many so suddenly. For children, we know many of the consequences of what's happening now will not be immediately visible, but they could be lifelong if we don't act. By addressing trauma now, and preventing further trauma and violence through strategies that strengthen families and communities and promote social connection and well-being, we can ensure that our children will be able to thrive and succeed once the physical health crisis is contained.

If you have any questions or need further information, please contact Kiersten Stewart at Futures Without Violence, kstewart@futureswithoutviolence.org, Marlo Nash with Saint Francis Ministries, Marlo.Nash@st-francis.org, or Jeff Hild at George Washington University, jeffhild@gwu.edu.

Sincerely,

After-School All-Stars
Afterschool Alliance
Alliance for Strong Families and Communities
American Psychological Association
Boys & Girls Clubs of America
Campaign for Trauma-Informed Policy and Practice (CTIPP)
Center for Community Resilience
CLASP
Committee for Children
Creative Community Services
Families USA
Family Care Network, Inc.
Family Focused Treatment Association
Futures Without Violence
Girls Inc.

Health Connect America
National Crittenton
National Youth Employment Coalition
Nexus Family Healing
Prevent Child Abuse America
Redstone Center for Prevention and Wellness
Saint Francis Ministries
Starr Commonwealth
Trust for America's Health
YMCA of the USA
YWCA USA