



April 9, 2009

The Honorable John Spratt  
US House of Representatives  
1401 Longworth Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Spratt:

We are writing to express our support for Senate Congressional Resolution 13, an amendment introduced by Senators Bond (R-MO) and Murray (D-WA) that would broaden the Administration's home visiting initiative to include a range of programs. The Senate passed the amendment during consideration of the FY10 budget resolution last week. We urge you to reconcile the House and Senate bills to adopt the Senate language.

As you may know, home visiting is an effective approach to preventing child abuse and neglect by building on protective factors and protecting against risk. Programs also improve parenting skills and increase school readiness. Home visiting program models serve distinct populations of parents in a variety of ways. The current budget language provides for only one home visitation program, serving only pregnant or first-time mothers.

For several years, advocates and representatives from all of the home visiting models in New York State have been meeting to discuss an ideal system of home visiting for the state's children and families. It was with great satisfaction that we saw the President's investment in prevention services, and specifically in home visitation. However, the proposal's narrow focus on nurse home visitation is of concern for our organizations. Not only is it exclusive of a variety of other programs with significant evaluation findings, but it would not serve a large cohort of families—for example, mothers in their second pregnancy.

The Senate's proposal broadens the scope of this funding, and provides for much-needed services for at-risk families. It is simply more responsive to the needs of children and families.

The Senate language:

- broadens eligibility beyond that included in the Administration's Nurse Home Visitation Program to include not just pregnant women and first-time mothers, but all parents and primary caregivers with a child under the age of kindergarten entry;

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- broadens the scope of service delivery beyond nurse practitioners to include social workers, child development specialists, and “other well-trained and competent staff”; and
- applies not only to evidence-based programs but to research-based programs “grounded in relevant empirically-based knowledge”.

As you debate both the House and Senate bills in Committee, we ask that you consider the needs of *all* children and families and support the Senate amendment. Families of all circumstances will benefit from a more flexible approach that still stresses outcomes, accountability, and evaluation.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



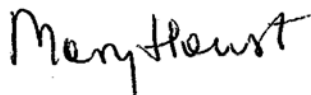
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