

November 27, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
U.S. Capitol Building, S-230
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
U.S. Capitol Building, S-221
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
U.S. Capitol Building, H-232
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
U.S. Capitol Building, H-204
Washington DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Ryan and Minority Leader Pelosi:

As first ladies, we have had front row seats from which to view the challenges facing many families and the range of possible solutions and programs available to help those families achieve their dreams. Most importantly, we have seen babies, thousands of them, grow into healthy, happy toddlers who are ready for school, ready for success, ready for life. That is why we have come together to urge you to reauthorize the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program, funding for which expired on September 30, 2017.

From our vantage point, we can say unequivocally that home visiting works. We know this not only because it has been rigorously studied for decades, but also because we have seen it in action. We have seen women transformed into confident, positive mothers. We have seen families who once struggled to make it through the day now striving toward long-term goals – graduating high school, buying homes, and maintaining jobs.

We ask that you act swiftly to reauthorize this important program for 5-years at no less than its current funding level of \$400 million annually. We also caution against including a harmful state match provision that will curtail services in states that are unable or unwilling to meet the match requirement.

As you know, MIECHV supports voluntary, evidence-based home visiting that provides a range of support services to families and children in all 50 states, six territories and numerous tribes and tribal organizations. Preliminary program outcomes demonstrate that 81 percent of states have showed improvements in maternal and newborn health; 85 percent showed improvements in school readiness; 85 percent showed improvements in family economic self-sufficiency; and 70 percent showed improvements in reducing domestic violence and crime.

Coming from a state government perspective, we are not surprised that MIECHV works as well as it does because MIECHV is designed to allow local leaders and policymakers the flexibility to choose how best to deliver the services to parents who decide to participate. The support and the framework come from Washington; the day-to-day decision-making is done by communities that know what they need--rigorous, evidence-based programs and outcome measures.

MIECHV has a rare level of bipartisan support and commitment that is both broad and deep. We ask that you turn that commitment into action and push MIECHV over the finish line as soon as possible before states are faced with curtailing services, freezing enrollment and shuttering programs. We also urge you to renew this important, bipartisan program for 5-years at no less than its current funding level of \$400 million annually. We want to reiterate that imposing a state match requirement will deny services to children and families in some states. Our nation needs more home visiting, not less.

Thank you for support and commitment to MIECHV and the hundreds of thousands of children and families it is empowering to live healthier more prosperous lives.

Sincerely,

Patricia J. Kempthorne
Parents as Teachers Board Chair
Former First Lady of Idaho (1999-2006)

Diana Mendley Rauner, Ph.D.
President, Ounce of Prevention Fund
First Lady of Illinois

Michele Ridge
Former First Lady of Pennsylvania (1995-2001)
Erie, Pennsylvania
Washington, DC

CC: The Honorable Orrin Hatch
The Honorable John Cornyn
The Honorable John Barrasso
The Honorable Roy Blunt
The Honorable Cory Gardner
The Honorable John Thune
The Honorable Richard Durbin
The Honorable Patty Murray
The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
The Honorable Elizabeth Warren
The Honorable Mark Warner
The Honorable Bernie Sanders
The Honorable Joe Manchin
The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
The Honorable Steve Scalise
The Honorable Luke Messer
The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
The Honorable Steny Hoyer
The Honorable James Clyburn
The Honorable Joseph Crowley