February 28, 2022

The Honorable Ron Wyden
The Honorable Mike Crapo
Chairman
Ranking Member
Senate Finance Committee
Senate Finance Committee
Washington, DC 20510
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Neal
The Honorable Kevin Brady
Chairman
Ranking Member
House Ways and Means Committee
House Ways and Means Committee
Washington, DC 20515
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Wyden, Ranking Member Crapo, Chairman Neal, and Ranking Member Brady:

The undersigned national, state, and local organizations thank you for your past support of the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV) and urge your support of a robust and timely reauthorization of the program by September 30, 2022.

The National Home Visiting Coalition is a diverse group of organizations committed to the well-being of children, united to promote federal support of home visiting to strengthen families in communities across the country. MIECHV is a federal grant program to states, territories, and Tribes that supports voluntary, evidence-based early childhood home visiting for families from pregnancy through kindergarten entry. Recognized as the gold standard for evidence-based policymaking, MIECHV-funded home visiting supports families by promoting interventions to improve maternal and infant health; creating connections between caregivers, the pediatric medical home, and other health practitioners in the community; providing screening for perinatal depression and connecting parents with appropriate community-based behavioral health care; supporting families in their child’s early development and learning; providing referrals when certain risk factors, including trauma or domestic violence, are present in the home; providing resources for children who experience trauma and toxic stress; targeting the social determinants of health affecting families, such as social support, parental stress, access to health care, income and poverty status, and environmental conditions; and helping families navigate complex community-based systems of supports.

MIECHV’s range of models with demonstrated effectiveness allows communities to select the approach that best addresses their needs. This local flexibility, along with strong evidence of success, enables this program to consistently yield true bipartisan support. As you work together to reauthorize MIECHV, the National Home Visiting Coalition respectfully seeks the following:

1) Increase MIECHV funding over the next five years to reach more families and better support the workforce.
MIECHV has received no increase since reaching its current funding level almost a decade ago, despite being recognized across the aisle as a model for evidence-based policy. Level funding year over year – with cuts for sequestration - challenges MIECHV’s ability to reach new families and ensure that home visitors earn a competitive wage. Pre-pandemic estimates showed MIECHV reached only three to five percent of eligible families each year. Statewide needs assessments required through the last MIECHV reauthorization have identified additional communities that would benefit from MIECHV, but those programs cannot be established without additional funding. Moreover, recruitment, retention, and high turnover of home visitors due to low wages, pose challenges to adequately serve families. To reach more eligible families and better serve the workforce primarily made up of women, the Home Visiting Coalition recommends scaling up MIECHV over the next five years with annual increases of $200 million, arriving at a total of $1.4 billion.

2) Double the Tribal set-aside.

Tribal MIECHV helps develop and strengthen tribal capacity to support and promote the health and well-being of families through home visiting in American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) communities, and support and strengthen cooperation and linkages between programs that serve tribal children and their families. Historical and ongoing inequities within AIAN communities have only been amplified by COVID-19. Currently, Tribal MIECHV receives $12 million annually for the more than 600 eligible Tribes and Tribal-serving organizations. To address these inequities, the Home Visiting Coalition recommends doubling the tribal set-aside within MIECHV from three to six percent to reach more families in AIAN communities.

3) Continue to allow virtual home visiting with model fidelity as an option for service delivery.

In 2020, Congress allowed virtual home visits to count as home visits through MIECHV during the national health emergency, removing barriers to the provision of services due to health and safety concerns. Yet, virtual home visiting has demonstrated many additional benefits including greater flexibility in where, how, and when families can receive visits, and increased access in areas where families often lack an entrance point to quality maternal, infant, and early childhood programs, including rural and frontier areas. The Home Visiting Coalition recommends that virtual home visiting implemented with model fidelity continue to be an allowable service delivery modality for families who choose it, as part of their receipt of comprehensive home visiting services.

Finally, timing is of the essence- the current MIECHV statute is slated to expire on September 30, 2022. It is imperative that MIECHV be reauthorized before it expires to avoid any lapse in programming. Likewise, a five-year reauthorization will provide stability and security to the field, further preventing any disruptions to the program.

The National Home Visiting Coalition and its state and local partners look forward to working with you to ensure a timely reauthorization that expands MIECHV to reach more families and better support the workforce. Thank you again for your ongoing support of MIECHV and the families who benefit from this essential program.
Sincerely,

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