



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P. O. Box 7882 Madison, WI 53707-7882

November 21, 2017

U.S. Senator Ron Johnson
328 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin
717 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

U.S. Representative Paul Ryan
1233 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

U.S. Representative Mark Pocan
1421 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

U.S. Representative Ron Kind
1502 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

U.S. Representative Gwen Moore
2252 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

U.S. Representative Jim Sensenbrenner
2449 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

U.S. Representative Glenn Grothman
1217 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

U.S. Representative Sean Duffy
2330 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

U.S. Representative Mike Gallagher
1007 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Honorable Members of the Wisconsin Delegation:

The undersigned Wisconsin State Legislators are writing today to express support for the reauthorization of the Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program. As you know, MIECHV provides federal funding for evidence-based home visiting programs and is up for reauthorization in Congress as bills S.1829 and H.R. 2824. As state elected officials who have seen and heard the positive impacts that home visiting services have on at-risk families, we urge your support for the Senate version of the bill that maintains current funding levels.

In 2016-17, Wisconsin received \$8.6 million in federal funding under the MIECHV program, which supports the Family Foundations Home Visiting (FFHV) Program administered by the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families in 24 counties and five tribes across the state. FFHV provides pregnant women, children and their families with in-home and mentoring supports through the first years of a child's life. Wisconsin's FFHV program is designed to assist pregnant moms and their families to begin on stronger footing by targeting the start of services before the baby is born. The FFHV program serves many of Wisconsin's most vulnerable families including 60% of program participants who have experienced at least three risk factors including poverty, reduced education levels, substance abuse or child maltreatment.

From 2012-2016, the number of families served by Wisconsin's FFHV program grew from 787 to 1,565 families, and from 10 counties and 4 tribes to 24 counties and 5 tribes, thanks in large part to increased federal funding efforts. According to the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families' 2016 FFHV

Program Annual Report, targeting this type of intervention to disadvantaged families as part of an early childhood outreach system can deliver returns on investment as high as 13% annually.

The federal funding of home visiting serves as the catalyst for generating state investment, as well as local and private agency and charitable foundation support to help expand programming across the state. While we applaud the proposed five-year reauthorization of MIECHV, the House bill requires a state match of 30% in 2020, 40% in 2021 and 50% in 2022. Wisconsin currently commits approximately \$1 million in GPR annually for home visiting. The state relies on TANF block grant dollars and local dollars to meet the match requirement. This increased state match requirement would place Wisconsin and other states across the nation in jeopardy of losing access to funding for critical home visiting services.

Several of the undersigned are members of the Assembly Speaker's Task Force on Foster Care or the Wisconsin Legislature's Children's Caucus and have heard many first-hand accounts of the benefits of home visiting services. We recently learned how two lives were saved in Brown County when trained home visiting staff took a suicidal young mom battling depression to the services she needed while also finding care for her baby. At the same time, we have also learned that 65% of counties across Wisconsin do not have access to home visiting services due to lack of funding. At a time when Wisconsin is considering ways to increase access to home visiting services in more counties, it is critically important to maintain the current level of federal funding. This is especially timely as states are grappling with the opioid and substance abuse crisis where funding for preventative services, like home visiting programs, becomes even more critical. It is our understanding that Congress will likely take up reauthorization of the MIECHV program by year's end. When the bills go to conference committee, we respectfully request that you support the Senate provision that maintains the current funding structure and does not require an extensive state match.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Joan Ballweg
State Representative
41st Assembly District

Alberta Darling
State Senator
8th Senate District

Jill Billings
State Representative
95th Assembly District

LaTonya Johnson
State Senator
6th Senate District

Jimmy Anderson
State Representative
47th Assembly District

Tim Carpenter
State Senator
3rd Assembly District

Terese Berceau
State Representative
77th Assembly District

Jon Erpenbach
State Senator
27th Senate District

Ed Brooks
State Representative
50th Assembly District

Chris Larson
State Senator
7th Senate District

Dave Considine
State Representative
81st Assembly District

Luther Olsen
State Senator
14th Senate District

David Crowley
State Representative
17th Assembly District

Janis Ringhand
State Senator
15th Senate District

Steve Doyle
State Representative
94th Assembly District

Lena Taylor
State Senator
4th Senate District

Eric Genrich
State Representative
90th Assembly District

Kathleen Vinehout
State Senator
31st Assembly District

Samantha Kerkman
State Representative
61st Assembly District

Joel Kitchens
State Representative
1st Assembly District

Debra Kolste
State Representative
44th Assembly District

Scott Krug
State Representative
72nd Assembly District

Beth Meyers
State Representative
74th Assembly District

Nick Milroy
State Representative
73rd Assembly District

Jeffrey Mursau
State Representative
36th Assembly District

Tod Ohnstad
State Representative
65th Assembly District

Sondy Pope
State Representative
80th Assembly District

Jessie Rodriguez
State Representative
21st Assembly District

Melissa Sargent
State Representative
48th Assembly District

Katrina Shankland
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71st Assembly District

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85th Assembly District

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45th Assembly District

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Ron Tusler
State Representative
3rd Assembly District

Chris Taylor
State Representative
76th Assembly District