

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 2, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Chairman
Committee on Education and Labor
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and Labor
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Chairman Scott, and Ranking Member Foxx:

As the 116th Congress comes to a close, we write to urge the House to pass two child welfare bills that passed the Senate unanimously on September, 17, 2020, the Jenna Quinn Law (S. 924) and the Supporting Family Mental Health in CAPTA Act (S. 1160). Both bills have bipartisan support and have also been introduced in the House of Representatives, as H.R. 8396 and H.R. 2503.

The Jenna Quinn Law will help ensure that more individuals who work with children have the tools and resources to prevent, recognize, and report child sexual abuse. Recent statistics show that one in every ten children will be a victim of sexual abuse before their 18th birthday. Teachers are among the highest reporters of child abuse. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic shifts to remote learning, child advocacy centers and state welfare agencies have experienced a drop in reports of child abuse. Unfortunately, we know this abuse has not ceased, it is just not being recognized or reported because of the number of children who are not physically in school. Providing federal funds to increase education and training on how to identify and report sexual abuse is critical now more than ever.

The Supporting Family Mental Health in CAPTA Act will make meaningful improvements to the delivery of mental health services for children and families connected to the child welfare system. It will help improve community-based prevention programs to strengthen families and enhance research and technical assistance programs on effective practices to prevent child abuse and neglect. Every child deserves to grow up in safe, stable and nurturing environment, but too often that is not the case for our nation's children. We need to improve our efforts to prevent and

respond to child maltreatment, which is especially important now as the continued strain on families due to the COVID-19 pandemic may be putting children at greater risk of harm.

We strongly support the goal of passing a bipartisan, comprehensive reauthorization of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). We are very pleased that this objective has bipartisan support, with the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee moving its version on December 12, 2019 and the U.S. House of Representatives passing its version by voice vote on May 20, 2019. Unfortunately, as the current Congress will adjourn in just over a month, it appears that there may not be sufficient time to complete a comprehensive CAPTA reauthorization. Therefore, we urge you to quickly take up S. 924 and S. 1160 so they can be signed into law by the end of the year and begin positively impacting children immediately in 2021. Both bills have already passed the Senate and we believe would have similar support should they be brought forward for a vote in the House. We should not allow challenges in passing a full CAPTA reauthorization to hold up these two positive, though modest, improvements to federal child welfare programs that have wide bipartisan support and would meaningfully improve the lives and safety of children across the country.

We appreciate your consideration of our request and your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Margaret Wood Hassam
United States Senator



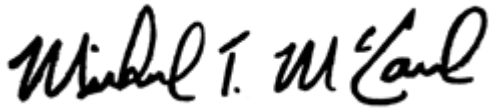
John Cornyn
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



Susan Wild
Member of Congress



Michael T. McCaul
Member Of Congress



Dean Phillips
Member Of Congress



Brian Fitzpatrick
Member Of Congress



Albio Sires
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