February 1, 2018

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and
Related Agencies
135 Dirksen Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and
Related Agencies
156 Dirksen Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and
Related Agencies
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and
Related Agencies
1016 Longworth House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Blunt, Ranking Member Murray, Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As organizations committed to promoting positive emotional development for our youngest children, we are writing to ask for your support in funding a groundbreaking new mental health provision that will help young children who are at risk for mental disorders realize their potential. As you work towards a final appropriations agreement for Fiscal Year (FY) 2018, we request that you fund the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Grant Program at $5 million, the amount included in H.R 3358. As the leaders of the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations, you have always shown a strong commitment to caring for our nation’s young children, especially those who are most in need. We hope you will help support the foundational development that positive early mental health represents.

In the last Congress, both the House and Senate recognized the importance of the mental health of young children and their families by passing the bipartisan *Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act of 2016* as a part of the *21st Century Cures Act*. This important legislation includes the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Promotion, Intervention, and Treatment provision (Sec. 10006), which creates grants that can leverage critically important services in states and communities. These grants will help to change the course for children at risk for mental disorders. By investing in early mental health prevention, identification, and treatment, we can promote positive emotional development from the start and reduce the need for treatment later in life, when it becomes much more difficult, time intensive, and expensive. Infant-early childhood mental health professionals across the country were thrilled with the passage of Sec. 10006 and are eager to get to work; yet the promise of this legislation will not be realized if the grants are not funded.

These grants will meet an immense need around the country. By directing resources where the foundations of strong mental health are laid – with young children, starting from birth- they are ultimately an investment in the future stability and capacity of our nation. For this reason, we urge you to allocate $5 million for the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health grants in the final FY 18 appropriations measure, and in doing so, invest directly in the services that will support young children and strengthen communities and our country.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work
American Association of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Children’s Health Fund
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
Mental Health America
National Association for Children’s Behavioral Health
NAMI, National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association of Social Workers
Nemours Children’s Health System
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
Treatment Communities of America
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