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Preventing Crime and Violence

June 17, 2008

Dear Representative:

FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS is a national anti-crime organization of more than 4,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, district attorneys, and victims of violence who have come together to take a hard-nosed look at the research about what really works to keep kids from becoming criminals. The law enforcement leaders of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS know from the front lines – and the research – that preventing child abuse and neglect is one of our strongest weapons in the fight against crime. **We are very pleased the House Education and Labor Committee will be marking-up the Education Begins at Home Act (H.R. 2343) on Wednesday, June 18th. We urge you to participate in the mark-up and to vote in favor of this important legislation.**

Child abuse and neglect increases by 29 percent the likelihood that an at-risk child will commit a violent crime when he or she grows up. Fortunately, quality, voluntary home visiting can help stop this cycle of violence. Home visiting programs help new parents get the information, skills and support they need to be better parents and promote healthy child development.

For example, the Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) home visiting program randomly assigned interested at-risk pregnant women to receive in-home visits by nurses starting before the birth of the first child and continuing until the child was age two. Rigorous research, originally published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, shows the program cut abuse and neglect among at-risk children in half and cut later arrests by 60%. NFP also cut the percentage of children who had serious language delays by more than half. Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis researchers concluded that NFP produced an average of five dollars in savings for every dollar invested.

Other home visiting models also produce positive results. For example, a randomized control trial of the Parents as Teachers model found that treatment for an injury in the prior year – a possible sign of abuse – was 3% among the children served compared to the 13% of children not served (at the time of a second year assessment). Unfortunately, hundreds of thousands of at-risk families nationwide do not have access to quality, voluntary home visiting.

The Education Begins at Home Act (H.R. 2343) would authorize \$150 million for FY09 and “such sums as may be necessary” for the 4 succeeding years, to expand the reach of voluntary, quality home visiting and authorize a parent and public education campaign about caring for infants and toddlers. The bill also includes language to ensure targeting of services to jurisdictions with the greatest need. We hope you will attend Wednesday’s markup of the Education Begins at Home Act, and support this investment to cut child abuse and neglect, improve children’s school readiness, reduce crime and save lives and money.

Sincerely,

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