

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 2008

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Chairman
Commerce, Justice, and Science Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
S-146A, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member
Commerce, Justice, and Science Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
SH-123
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Mikulski and Ranking Member Shelby:

As you begin work on your Subcommittee's Fiscal Year 2009 Appropriations bill, we respectfully request that you fund Children's Advocacy Center programs authorized under the Victims of Child Abuse Act of 1990, including local Children's Advocacy Centers, the National Children's Alliance and the Regional Children's Advocacy Centers programs - at \$30 million. We greatly appreciate the Subcommittee's support in the past for these critically important programs.

Based on a model originally developed by U.S. Congressman Bud Cramer, Children's Advocacy Centers provide an efficient, cost-effective mechanism of handling cases of severe child abuse and are strongly supported by law enforcement, prosecutors, and the judiciary. The funding this program receives through the appropriations process goes directly to local Children's Advocacy Centers around the country in the form of grants for program support, training, and program development. Since 1992, the Committee's funding has enabled the establishment of more than 700 Children's Advocacy Centers in communities across the country.

Children's Advocacy Centers are community based public-private partnerships dedicated to a team of professionals pursuing the truth in child abuse investigations. Professionals from law enforcement, prosecution, child protective services, victim advocacy agencies, and the medical and mental health communities work together to investigate and intervene in cases of suspected child abuse. Designed by professionals and volunteers responding to the needs of their own communities, Children's Advocacy Centers provide services to more than 171,000 children annually. Although funded in part through public dollars, Children's Advocacy Centers are primarily private, non-profit, 501(C) 3 organizations and are partially funded through private dollars.

The primary mission of a Children's Advocacy Center is to prevent further victimization by ensuring that investigations are comprehensive and meet the age appropriate needs of the child. Communities with Children's Advocacy Centers report increased successful prosecution of perpetrators, consistent follow-up to reports of child abuse, and reduction in re-abuse rates for child victims.

Children's Advocacy Centers can be found in every type of community including rural, urban, and suburban. They can also be found on Native American Tribal Reservations. Children's Advocacy Centers provide services to children from birth to age 18 with close to 40% of the children younger than 6 years old. In 2006, 70% of children receiving services were victims of sexual abuse and 13% physical abuse -- while 17% of children were victims of neglect, witnessed violence and other such offenses.

We appreciate that this is an extremely difficult budget year. The generosity shown by the Committee in fully funding the Victims of Child Abuse Act for FY 2008 was truly appreciated. We believe that the remarkable growth and expansion of the Children's Advocacy Center Programs, as

well as the sheer volume of child abuse victims being served by these Centers, warrants increasing funding for FY 2009. Therefore, we respectfully request funding for these Victims of Child Abuse Act programs at \$30 million.

Thank you for your leadership in this critical area and for your consideration of this request.

Respectfully yours,

Bleuett L. Lincoln

Joe I. Rubin

Mark Boyer

Austen M. Collins

Ben Baker

Debbie Stabenow

Amy Klobuchar

Chuck Schumer

Mike Crayon

Noam Coleman

Bar Sanders

Bob Hendry

Steve Johnson

Tim W. Laska

Jim Rubin

Rabert Menendez

Byron Dorgan Frank R. Lautenberg

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Jon Kyl

Jack Reed

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Mary Gandy

Carl Levin

Hillary Rodham Clinton

Chris Shays

Chris Dodd

Sheldon Whitehouse

Bob Casey, Jr.

Max Baucus

John F. Kerry

Heb Kohl

Ken Salazar

Jay Byrnes

Bill Nelson
