



February 16, 2018

The Honorable Orrin Hatch
Chairman
Senate Committee on Finance
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Finance
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Hatch and Ranking Member Wyden,

On behalf of the First Five Years Fund (FFYF), I am writing to thank you for your commitment to the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV) and for including a 5-year reauthorization of the program in the Budget Resolution Act of 2018 that was signed into law last week. Your continued support and funding for highly effective, evidence-based, voluntary early childhood home visiting programs is vital especially as our nation confronts the opioid crisis. MIECHV has already shown positive results working with families struggling with addiction on a small scale. The program is well positioned to contribute to efforts afoot combating the opioid epidemic in your Committee and the Congress as a whole.

Opioid addiction has had a swift and deadly impact on communities across America. Bringing an end to this crisis will require coordinated, comprehensive efforts at all levels of government and across many programs, including home visiting. Home visitors meet families where they are and have the ability to connect families with professional services in their area. This is true when families are faced with challenges around addiction, as well as other health, mental health, and social service needs. Additionally, home visitors can help families by scheduling appointments and arranging for child care. Some Home Visitors are Registered Nurses and Licensed Social Workers; these talented professionals have a proven track record of reducing the rates of prenatal substance exposure and providing successful interventions to children who are born drug addicted or have been substance-exposed early in life. Home visiting has demonstrated that it can have positive effects on at-risk families.

Voluntary, high quality home visiting produces positive outcomes and is a useful prevention, as well as intervention, strategy in combating the national opioid epidemic. MIECHV serves as a crucial source of funding that enables states to serve families with opioid and substance use disorders. Further, quality home visiting helps communities avoid the human and financial cost of prenatal substance exposure by engaging pregnant women and encouraging those with an addiction to seek treatment. As your Committee and the Congress tackle how to support efforts to combat this horrific crisis, I want to remind you of the value in the type of coordinated care home visiting brings to American communities.

Thank you again for recognizing the on-going value that MIECHV offers to families struggling with addiction. Please know that the First Five Years Fund stands ready to serve as a resource to you and the full Finance Committee as you work to identify successful services and supports for at-risk families.

Sincerely,

Sarah Rittling
Interim Executive Director
First Five Years Fund