

July 8, 2019

The Honorable Kim Schrier  
1123 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Steve Stivers  
2234 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Representatives Kim Schrier and Steve Stivers:

On behalf of First Focus Campaign for Children, a bipartisan children's advocacy organization dedicated to making children and families the priority in federal policy and budget decisions, we are writing to thank you for your leadership in introducing the Early Detection to Stop Infant Abuse and Prevent Fatalities Act (H.R. 2076).

Child abuse and neglect is a serious issue that has lasting impacts on children for years to come. Early detection of abuse and neglect is imperative in protecting the wellbeing of American children. Medical providers, child protective workers, and caregivers of young infants should have support from our government in order to effectively identify such indicators and protect children from further harm.

In 2017, over 600,000 children were victims of abuse and neglect, and the largest proportion of these cases involved children less than the age of one.<sup>1</sup> The rate of abuse per 1000 children for children younger than one was 25.3. In comparison, the rate of abuse per 1000 for eight year olds was 8.9 per 1000 children.<sup>2</sup> It is clear that prevention at a young age is critical in protecting the safety and well-being of children. However, it is much harder to identify abuse and neglect in younger children. According to research, minor injuries in young children are often overlooked or missed by medical professionals and child caregivers, putting abused children at risk for repeated abuse and even death.<sup>3</sup> Proper identification of these sentinel injuries can protect children, but identification methods need to be improved.<sup>4</sup>

H.R. 2076 will improve the early detection of infant abuse to protect children from further abuse and neglect, as well as prevent child fatalities. We recognize the importance of this legislation in preventing abuse and neglect of young children, and thus preventing the longlasting negative implications abuse has. Research has shown that child abuse detrimentally impacts a child's development<sup>5</sup> and can lead to severe problems later in life, such as an increased risk of depression,

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<sup>1</sup> National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System, 2017

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/136/5/831>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235905801\\_Sentinel\\_Injuries\\_in\\_Infants\\_Evaluated\\_for\\_Child\\_Physical\\_Abuse](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235905801_Sentinel_Injuries_in_Infants_Evaluated_for_Child_Physical_Abuse)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0145213402003411>

suicide, and substance abuse.<sup>6</sup> Through this bill, the physical, emotional, and mental health and wellbeing of children will be protected now and in the future.

Our country should provide necessary protection from abuse and neglect for children so that they can grow and thrive in a safe and positive environment. By supporting the development of early abuse identification best practices and the hard-working professionals that work to protect American children, many lives will be saved. We thank you for your leadership on behalf of children and families, and we look forward to working with you to help advance this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bruce Lesley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent flourish at the end of the last name.

Bruce Lesley, President

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0145213417301084>