

4/17/20

Dear Senator/Representative:

Emergency responders and health care providers are caring for the nation at great risk to themselves during the current public health and economic crisis. Human services professionals are part of this workforce on the frontlines, including child welfare and mental and behavioral health care workers. **I am writing on behalf of [INSERT your agency name here] to ask you to include these essential workers, and the critical systems of care they support, in the next COVID-19 relief package.** While we appreciate actions taken so far to respond to this crisis, more must be done. Resources are needed to protect the well-being of youth and families and to ensure our stressed human services infrastructure does not collapse.

Congress should prioritize the needs of youth and families and the human services workforce in at least two ways:

1. **Allocate an additional \$4.1 Billion for Social Services Block Grants (SSBG) to states to cover new expenses incurred by COVID-19 response and recovery.** This flexible funding can be used to address the current and emerging needs of vulnerable children and families. **For example, [INSERT 2-3 examples of increased need you are responding to in your community or increased expenses/service provision due to COVID-19 shutdowns].** States can use this funding to fill in the gaps and provide essential services now and in the wake of the evolving crisis.
2. **Support our essential human services workforce.** This current crisis is requiring child welfare, mental and behavioral health care workers to put their lives on the line everyday as they continue to provide direct services for our vulnerable children and families. Providers of services are doing their best to balance the risk to their staff with the necessity of providing care and treatment for children and families who may have been exposed to or tested positive for COVID-19. **[INSERT an example of a challenge you are facing in sustain your workforce].** It is imperative that we compensate those willing to provide this extraordinary care. Please provide “hazard pay” or “emergency COVID-19 response pay” to those essential workers on the frontlines, including human services staff, whose jobs require risk of exposure to COVID-19.

Thank you for working to ensure we meet these critical needs. We appreciate your work every day, but today, we are thankful for your leadership during this challenging time.

Sincerely,