



*Jim Justice*  
*Governor of West Virginia*

May 8, 2020

Dear Members of the West Virginia Congressional Delegation,

I am writing to request your assistance to support the critical work that is occurring at a local level with our Family Resource Networks (FRNs), the Starting Points Centers, home visiting programs, and our other great community-based organizations as they are helping families as they deal with this crisis of COVID-19.

We absolutely cannot allow for our children to pay the price as families and communities struggle in these perilous times. We must support community-based organizations that are implementing strategies that build protective factors in families and help prevent child abuse and neglect. If we fail to do so, then COVID-19 will have even more dire impacts, and we will lose progress we have made in recent years.

Across West Virginia, FRNs and other community-based organizations have stepped up during this crisis and are helping families in so many ways. They are assisting with getting food to hungry families, providing diapers and formula for babies, helping parents deal with parenting stress, having virtual home visits and playgroups to connect vulnerable families, and so many other ways. But these programs are stretched thin. We know the needs of our families are going to continue throughout the summer and beyond.

The challenges are daunting and families that never thought they would need assistance are asking for help, often from community-based services such as FRNs and local family resource centers. This pandemic has created a common denominator of stress and challenge for most families. It has created new risk factors and heightened existing ones. It shows us that any family can experience problems that need to be addressed, even families that typically are managing reasonably well. If we are not really careful, the stress is going to be too much.

The impacts of COVID-19 are putting additional stress on families who are attempting to navigate new public health safety protocols, school closures, uncertain childcare arrangements, job losses, social isolation, and significant barriers to many critical support services. These kinds of stress increase the risk of child abuse and neglect at the same time family supports and child welfare response are challenged by the public health crisis. Facing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that addresses the entire child welfare continuum.



I urge you to ensure Congress sends funds to strengthen the state and local systems that prevent and respond to child abuse and neglect and that address the needs of children, youth, and families already in the foster care system.

To address these challenges and support vulnerable children and families, I urge Congress to provide dedicated funding to state and local governments and organizations. West Virginia already has the systems in place with trained and trusted professionals supporting families through our Family Resource Networks, Starting Points Centers, home visiting programs, and other family support programs. Increased funding will allow programs the ability to adapt to current challenges and meet the increased need. I support the national and state advocates in their request to Congress to provide emergency funding for the following programs:

- **\$1 billion for Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) Grants.** This would help states and local organizations better meet the increased need for child abuse prevention programs and adapt services to account for social distancing.
- **\$20 million for Kinship Navigator Programs.** This would help respond to the skyrocketing demand for information and connections to resources among families where grandparents and other relatives are raising children.
- **\$1 billion for Title IV-B Part 2.** This would help child welfare agencies provide the services necessary to stabilize families, support family preservation efforts, and prevent a major influx of children into the foster care system.
- **\$500 million for CAPTA Title I.** These flexible funds would help ensure child welfare agencies' response, investigations, and interventions of child abuse and neglect are not dangerously upended.
- **\$30 million for the Court Improvement Program.** This would help address child welfare court shutdowns, reduced staffing, technological challenges and other issues that are compromising child safety and delaying family reunification.
- **Increase FMAP for Title IV-E Prevention Program.** This will help make affordable mental health and substance disorder services and other interventions that support family stabilization and keep children safe but out of foster care.
- **Increase funding to Title IV-E Chafee funds by \$500 million.** This would allow states could ensure a flexible, rapid response to the emerging needs of young people in the transition from foster care to adulthood.
- **Provide \$100 million in one-time emergency support for the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program** to help preserve evidence-based early childhood home visitation programs that have had to switch to virtual meetings with families due to social distancing.

Together these programs help ensure that our children grow up healthy, safe, and ready to learn. They help our families who are dealing with so much. Please join me in supporting this request for emergency assistance to ensure that our children are safe.

May 8, 2020

I am so proud of our state, the resilience of my fellow West Virginians, and the work of our family support programs. Together, with increased funding, we can expand services to more vulnerable children and families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jim Justice". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jim Justice  
Governor