



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES  
*Office of the Commissioner*

S. Duke Storen  
Commissioner

April 28, 2020

The Honorable Robert C. "Bobby" Scott  
Member of Congress  
1201 Longworth House Office Bldg  
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Increased federal funding for child abuse prevention

Dear Congressman Scott:

As Virginia is working to ensure the wellbeing of our children and families, we 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. Entire families are sheltering at home, often in close quarters. Anxiety about health, education and finances is high. Children aren't seeing the teachers, counselors and other adults who would normally raise concerns about their well-being. The Covid-19 pandemic has created the conditions for a rise in child abuse that could go unchecked.

The impacts of COVID-19 are putting 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. That's why we have joined nearly 600 national, state, and local organizations in signing [this letter](#) urging Congress to act swiftly to support our children and families.

Currently, reports of child abuse have decreased in Virginia because children are isolated and no longer in school. There is always a significant uptick in reports of child abuse when kids return to school. This year we expect the increase to be even higher than in the past due to the increased stress and decreased resources available to families. Local services are already

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experiencing hiring freezes and budget cuts. Now more than ever we need funding to prevent abuse before it occurs or escalates.

To address these challenges and support vulnerable children and families, we urge Congress to provide dedicated funding to state and local governments and organizations. We already have the systems with trained and trusted professionals working hard every day, but states and their local partners need emergency money to continue operations, adapt to current challenges, and meet the increased need. We urge you 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.
- **\$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.
- **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.

Furthermore, increases to the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) are needed to help states fill in gaps to critical services including child protective services, child abuse prevention supports, domestic violence services, and foster care.

Sincerely,



S. Duke Storen