



April 16, 2009

The Honorable John M. Spratt
Chairman, Budget Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Ranking Member, Budget Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Spratt and Ranking Member Ryan:

The Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) on behalf of public and private child-serving agencies nationwide writes in support of the Fiscal Year 2010 Budget Resolution that incorporates key priorities of President Obama's proposed budget. Of critical importance to CWLA is the need for a federal home visitation program. We are pleased that the House included a reserve fund to provide mandatory funding for home visiting programs. CWLA believes that any federally funded home visitation program should establish an effective national policy which addresses evidence based policy, values a broad range of models, and accounts for disproportionality, diversity, and cultural competency.

As you work towards a conference agreement with your colleagues in the Senate, we would like to offer some recommendations. We agree that a national home visiting program should support models that serve low-income mothers-to-be and low-income families. However, we would recommend including at-risk families to the population in need of these vital services. In addition, we believe that the services should be delivered by nurses, social workers, child development specialists, and other well-trained and competent staff as well. We also believe that the funding should support evidence-based and evidence-informed home visitation models that have been shown to improve the health, well-being, and self-sufficiency of these at-risk families and has been tested and evaluated in both well-designed and rigorous research. We suggest that the committee consider expanding this language to allow legislation that is not limited to one specific program model.

We believe that these elements are essential to an effective home visiting program. Once again, CWLA supports the House Budget Resolution and look forward to working with all members of the Congress to ensure federal commitment and resources for vital services that protect children from abuse and neglect. Finally, we urge members of the House of Representatives to support the Budget Resolution and to ensure that the home visiting reserve fund is retained.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christine James Brown". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Christine James-Brown
President/CEO