



Hearing on the Reauthorization of the Maternal, Infant, Early Childhood Home Visiting
(MIECHV) Program

Statement for the Record

Submitted by

The Home Visiting Coalition

3/29/2017

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Davis, and members of the House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Human Resources: The Home Visiting Coalition, a diverse group of nearly 50 organizations working to promote continued federal investment in evidence-based home visiting, is honored to submit testimony in strong support of the Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program.

The investments that we make in our people today will pay dividends in the future. Nowhere is that statement truer than with children. Our children are the embodiment of our ideals and the promise of our nation. Iconic leaders of our nation have always focused on family. President Ronald Reagan said “The family has always been the cornerstone of American society. Our families nurture, preserve, and pass on to each succeeding generation the values we share and cherish, values that are the foundation of our freedoms.” In that same vein, President John F. Kennedy said “Children are living messages we send to a time we will not see.”

Home visitors help families send positive messages to future generations. By using practices proven to work, these talented providers bring to the surface the innate gifts parents possess to nurture children to become healthy, well adjusted, and ready to learn. The home visiting community knows that no parent is perfect, but believes that with the appropriate support, each parent can be the best parent for their child, and parents are ideally suited to be their baby’s first and best teacher.

The Home Visiting Coalition commends you on your commitment to reauthorizing the MIECHV program. Home visiting programs provide support to vulnerable families in the earliest stages of their child's life to lay the foundation for the health, education, and social development and success of the entire family. The birth of a child introduces new challenges for every family. But for families facing poverty, a lack of education, and isolation from community resources, life can begin to feel overwhelming. To help more families achieve stability and to reach more children and communities, the Home Visiting Coalition recommends that MIECHV be reauthorized for a minimum of 5 years, with incremental increases in funding, over five years, until the program reaches \$800 million per year.

When Congress enacted the MIECHV program, families who may have felt like they were going it alone had a sense of community restored. MIECHV changed the reality in high needs areas around the country, from one of isolation and families doing their best to get by, to a reality where there are people ready to help parents to do their best in proven and time honored ways. MIECHV supports families through home visitors who respect parent's rights, instincts, and traditions. MIECHV puts families first to strengthen communities and improve outcomes for kids and their families.

A cornerstone of evidence-based public policy, MIECHV provides funds for developing and implementing voluntary, evidence-based home visiting programs. Programs must meet at least four of six evidence-based benchmarks to qualify for use of federal funds. The benchmarks include: improving maternal and newborn health; reducing child injuries, abuse, and neglect; improving school readiness and achievement; reducing crime or domestic violence; improving family economic self-sufficiency; and improving coordination and referral for other community resources. According to the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), as of 2015, 83% of MIECHV grantees demonstrated overall improvement in benchmark areas (HRSA, 2016); 81% of MIECHV grantees demonstrated improvements in maternal and newborn health; 85% of MIECHV grantees demonstrated improvements in school readiness and achievement; and 85% of MIECHV grantees demonstrated improvements in family economic self-sufficiency. Screenings for developmental delays in young children are twice the national average in 18 states with MIECHV programs.

In addition, several studies have proven that home visiting programs show a substantial return on investment, which may later save on state and federal expenditures. The Nurse Family Partnership (NFP) has a benefit-cost ratio of up to \$5.70 per dollar invested (Karoly, Kilburn, & Cannon, 2005). The Durham Connects program model has a community benefit-cost ratio of up to 3.01 per dollar invested (Dodge, et al., 2014). Parents as Teachers (PAT) has an estimated benefit-cost ratio of 3.39 per dollar invested (Washington State Institute for Public Policy, 2015).

The aforementioned results are just a part of the reason that MIECHV enjoys bipartisan support. MIECHV funds 17 scientifically proven models that strengthen families over time, and families' participation is fully voluntary. Importantly, state and local grantees determine the best way to use MIECHV funding to effectively address the unique needs of their communities.

More than anything, it is the real people and families that have made this program so strong. Parents like Elizabeth Eddings, a mother of three originally from Alabama, are anxiously awaiting news that Congress has voted to once again support MIECHV. Ms. Eddings voluntarily enrolled in the home visiting program Parents as Teachers.

Through those regular visits with a trained parent educator, she was able to escape a damaging relationship, secure health interventions for her child, and start down the path to economic self-sufficiency.

“Thanks to my home visitor, who I understand is supported through the MIECHV program, my son has the help he needs,” says Ms. Eddings. “That’s why I’m in a position today to share with you why this program is so valuable to families and communities.” Ms. Eddings, along with thousands of other moms and dads across the country, is encouraged to know that the Ways and Means Committee’s Human Resources Subcommittee has begun the work to reauthorize MIECHV.

Without timely reauthorization, the critical services provided by MIECHV-supported home visiting programs will be drastically limited for families in need. Home visiting can make all the difference in the lives of individual families and, by extension, entire communities, breaking generations-long cycles of poverty, addiction, abuse, and despair. Regular visits by caring, experienced professionals can help parents turn their good intentions into solid parenting and coping skills. We are excited that the Ways and Means Committee is so strongly in favor of the MIECHV program and look forward to working with you further to reauthorize this essential program.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement for the record.

The Home Visiting Coalition:

Alliance for Early Success

Alliance for Strong Families and Communities

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Psychological Association

Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs (AMCHP)

Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO)

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

Child Care Aware of America

Child First

Children’s Defense Fund

Child Welfare League of America

Dalton Daley Group (DDG)

Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children

Early Intervention Program for Adolescent Mothers

Easterseals

Family Check-Up

Family Spirit

First 5 Association of California
First 5 California
First 5 LA
First Five Years Fund (FFYF)
First Focus
Futures Without Violence
Healthy Families America (HFA)/Prevent Child Abuse America (PCA)
Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPI USA)
IDEA Infant Toddler Coordinators Association (ITCA)
Institute for Child Success
March of Dimes
National Alliance of Children's Trust & Prevention Funds
National Association of Counties (NACo)
National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO)
National Association of Nurse Practitioners
National Child Abuse Coalition
National Head Start Association (NHSA)
Nemours Children's Health System
Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP)
Ounce of Prevention Fund
Parent-Child Home Program
Parents as Teachers (PAT)
Partnership for America's Children
Play & Learning Strategies (PALS)
SafeCare
Save the Children
Save the Children Action Network
The Children's Partnership
The National Campaign to Prevent Teen & Unplanned Pregnancy
United Way Worldwide