



State of Louisiana
Louisiana Department of Health
Office of the Secretary

November 30, 2017

Senator William "Bill" Cassidy, M.D.
520 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Cassidy,

I am writing to draw your attention to the urgent need to reauthorize the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV), which expired on September 30th. Research and decades of evidence have demonstrated that home visiting helps put families on a path to good health, educational success and economic self-sufficiency. As a cost-effective initiative producing substantial returns on investment, MIECHV has received decades of strong bipartisan support. This program has been a vital resource for families in Louisiana, particularly for low-income pregnant women and children.

Louisiana MIECHV supports two voluntary, evidence-based home visiting models known as Nurse Family Partnership and Parents as Teachers. These MIECHV-funded models connect parents with trained home visiting nurses or professional parent educators. In state fiscal year 2017, the Louisiana MIECHV program provided support to 3,801 families through 40,461 home visits.

With the recent September 30th expiration of the MIECHV program, one Congressional renewal proposal requires an unprecedented state \$1 for \$1 match. Such a requirement for states to match federal dollars one-for-one would be detrimental for Louisiana, which is facing a budget shortfall of \$1.5 billion. Louisiana would be forced to cut home visiting services or other critical programs to divert money to home visiting. Local programs could shut down, the state will lose expert and experienced staff, and families would lose services they rely on. Disruption in the home visitor-family relationships would negatively impact the very outcomes that Congress has been working to improve in supporting home visiting.

Senator William "Bill" Cassidy, M.D.

November 30, 2017

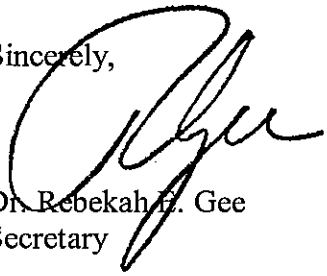
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Further exacerbating a resulting cut in services, the state match requirement would increase the reporting burden and decrease flexibility and long-term stability in services, resulting in a reduced capacity to help children and families meet their needs. Nationally, home visiting programs serve only approximately 6% of the eligible children and families who would benefit from these services. Our hope is that a five-year reauthorization of MIECHV would allow us to expand home visiting in our communities, not reduce it.

We trust that you recognize such a move as being detrimental to the home visiting program in Louisiana. We respectfully request that you continue working with your colleagues in Congress to ensure a five-year reauthorization of MIECHV as soon as possible, given that the September 30th deadline has already passed, and to ensure that a final version of reauthorization does not include the harmful state match requirement.

If I can provide any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you again for your leadership and for advocating for our Louisiana families.

Sincerely,



Dr. Rebekah F. Gee
Secretary

cc: Louisiana Congressional Delegation