



February 11, 2016

The Honorable Robert Casey, Jr.  
United States Senate  
393 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Pat Toomey  
United States Senate  
248 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Casey and Toomey:

Daily the undersigned are engaged in diverse work to ensure every child is connected to a safe, stable and supported family. Despite the diversity of our work, we are united in our deep understanding that the foundation for lifelong health, well-being, educational success, and economic opportunity is established within the critical years of early childhood, especially from birth to age three.

We write to express how encouraged we are that you serve on the United States Senate Committee on Finance. Your commitment to the nurture, protection and early learning of Pennsylvania's youngest children will be instrumental when the Senate Finance Committee considers the Family First Act in 2016. This legislation and its commitment to upfront, time-limited, evidence-based services for children who safely remain at home with their family arrives as Pennsylvania confronts an alarming and relentless heroin and opioid epidemic.

Between 2010 and 2014, more than 7,500 infants were born onto Medicaid and diagnosed with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) in Pennsylvania. Heroin and other opioids taken during pregnancy, including drugs prescribed to a pregnant woman as part of her participation in substance abuse treatment (e.g., Methadone Buprenorphine), can result in NAS.

The proposed Family First legislation is precedent-setting as it seeks to amend federal law to include a subtitle related to Investing in Prevention and Family Services. If enacted states could be proactive, strategic and more reliant on evidence-based interventions with families increasing the likelihood that a child can safely remain with his/her family. The proposed Family First Act is particularly promising for substance-exposed infants. We also find this emerging commitment to direct federal funding to upfront and evidence-based interventions consistent with Congress' 2003 amendment of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) requiring the development of a Plan of Safe Care for certain substance-exposed infants.

We are encouraged that the Family First legislation could help facilitate federal agencies and states to connect policy provisions – across federal and state statutes - and to maximize a variety of public funding streams to implement Plans of safe Care that improve outcomes for infants and parents confronting the chronic health condition of addiction.

Again, we remain encouraged by the initial bipartisan work surrounding the Family First Act and we look forward to your leadership to help your colleagues recognize the importance of this federal legislation to young children and families directly impacted by the heroin and opioid epidemic.

Please be assured of our commitment to work with you and the full Pennsylvania Congressional delegation throughout 2016 as the Family First Act evolves in Congress.

Sincerely,

**American Academy of Pediatrics, PA Chapter**  
Suzanne Yunghans, Executive Director

**CASA Youth Advocates, Inc.**  
Anne Shenberger MSS LSW, Executive Director

**Central Susquehanna Community Foundation**  
M. Holly Morrison, CEO

**Children's Advocacy Center of Lawrence County**  
Sue Ascione, Executive Director

**Crawford County CASA**  
Cindy Knight, Executive Director

**Crime Victim Center of Erie**  
Paul Lukach, Executive Director

**Family Service Assn. of Bucks County**  
Audrey J. Tucker, CEO

**HAVIN (Helping All Victims in Need)**  
Jo Ellen Bowman, Executive Director

**Huntingdon House**  
Jean R Collins, Executive Director

**Maternity Care Coalition**  
Joanne Fischer, Executive Director

**Network of Victim Assistance**  
Barbara Clark, Executive Director

### **INDIVIDUALS**

Ken Bacha, Westmoreland County Coroner  
Marsha Barth (Berks County)  
Jerry C. Borden, Warren County Coroner  
Larry Breitenstein (Allegheny County)  
Pat Bruno, M.D., FAAP (Snyder County)  
Jocelyn Clyde (Armstrong County)  
Juliann Gombosi (Lycoming County)  
Scott M. Grim, Lehigh County Coroner  
Dennis J. Hess, Berks County Coroner  
Edward R. Howell, Wayne County Coroner  
Charles E. Kiessling, Lycoming County Coroner  
Ruth Kolb (Allegheny County)  
Benjamin H. Levi, MD PhD (Dauphin County)

**Nurse-Family Partnership National Service Office**  
Tara Dechert, Business Development Manager

**Office of Victim Advocate**  
Jennifer Storm, Victim Advocate

**Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape**  
Delilah Rumburg, CEO

**Pennsylvania Council of Churches**  
Rev. Sandra L. Strauss, Director of Advocacy and Ecumenical Outreach

**Pennsylvania State Coroners Association**  
Susan M. Shanaman, Counsel

**Philadelphia Children's Alliance**  
Chris Kirchner, Executive Director

**Prevent Child Abuse PA**  
Teresa Olsen, Director

**Rehabilitation and Community Providers Association**  
Connell O'Brien, Director Children's Division

**The Center for Children's Justice**  
Mary Achilles, Board Chair  
Cathleen Palm, Founder

**York County Cribs for Kids**  
Michael Goodstein, MD

Audrey Miller (Armstrong County)  
Eugene Quaglia (Berks County)  
Renee Riddle, MD (Berks County)  
Gregory P Rohanna, Greene County Coroner  
Patricia M. Ross, Blair County Coroner  
Scott A. Sayers, Centre County Coroner  
Jenny Murphy-Shiflet (Dauphin County)  
Elizabeth A. Schmoyer, RN, BSN, Med (Berks County)  
Gary I. Shuey (Cumberland County)  
Karen Snider (Dauphin County)  
Meghan Winslow (Lebanon County)  
Patricia Yoder, MSN, RN (Lancaster County)