

October 16, 2020

The Honorable Lucy McBath
1513 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Representative McBath,

We write to express our strong support for the Improving Data Collection for Adverse Childhood Experiences Act (H.R. 7689). This vital piece of legislation would build upon previous studies on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in innovative and equitable ways.

ACEs are potentially traumatic events that can have long-lasting effects on an individual's life. As the number of ACEs an individual is exposed to increases so does the risk for negative outcomes such as asthma and cancer in adulthood. ACEs have become an important focus in public health. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that if ACEs were prevented there would be 21 million fewer cases of depression, 1.9 million fewer cases of heart disease, and 2.5 million fewer cases of obesity.¹

The original ACEs study conducted by the CDC and Kaiser Permanente was groundbreaking in advancing understanding of these effects. By categorizing ACEs into three groups: abuse, neglect, and household challenges it found as the number of ACEs increase so does the risk for negative outcomes.² However, this study is not free from critiques for, among other things, lacking a representative study population (the study sample was predominantly white, middle income patients) and insufficiently measuring the impact of social and economic conditions on risk for adversity.³

This bill would enable the CDC to build on the original study while addressing these concerns. The study would have a focus on equity by including a diverse nationally representative sample. It would examine the strength of the relationship between ACEs and negative health outcomes, the intensity and frequency of ACEs and the relative strength of particular risk and protective factors. This legislation would also expand the scope of CDC's research outside of household factors to examine the effects that social, economic, and community conditions have on health and well-being. This research is critical to informing current and future programs aimed at mitigating the negative effects of ACEs and promoting the health of children, families, communities nationwide.

We thank you for your leadership on this important issue. This critical legislation will go far in expanding our knowledge of the of ACEs and how to mitigate their effects.

¹ BRFFS 2015-2017, 25 states, CDC Vital Signs, November 2019

² Vincent J. Felitti et al., *Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults*, (American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 1998), 245-258

³ Craig A. McEwen PhD, Scout F. Gregerson BA *A Critical Assessment of the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study at 20 Years*, (American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 2019), 790-794

Sincerely,

2020 Mom

Affect Mental Health

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Art Therapy Association

American Art Therapy Association

American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work

American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

American Association of Suicidology

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

American Group Psychotherapy Association

American Occupational Therapy Association

American Psychiatric Association

Anxiety and Depression Association of America

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

Confederation of Independent Psychoanalytic Societies

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance

Faces & Voices of Recovery

Futures Without Violence

Inseparable

International OCD Foundation

Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance

Mental Health America

MENTOR

Mom Congress

National Association of Social Workers (NASW)

National Alliance on Mental Illness

National Association for Children of Addiction

National Association for Children's Behavioral Health

National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners

National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors

National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health

National League for Nursing

National Network of Public Health Institutes

Postpartum Support International

Prevention Institute

The Kennedy Forum

The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health

Trust for America's Health

Well Being Trust