

Become an Original Cosponsor of the "Strengthening America's Families Act of 2020"

Sending Office: Honorable Rosa L. DeLauro
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HELP PREVENT CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT

Cosponsor the "Strengthening America's Families Act of 2020"

Dear Colleague,

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted us all differently. Many families have found themselves under significant stress due to social isolation, economic uncertainty, mental health concerns, or fear of falling ill. Tragically, for some, this stress manifests as child maltreatment and, because of their rapid brain development, young children who experience abuse, and the instability of life in foster care, have a high likelihood of significant and detrimental impacts on their emotional and cognitive development, with lasting effects.

Child abuse is a silent epidemic in the time of COVID-19: calls to abuse and neglect hotlines are down nearly 20%^[i] and—with many early care and learning programs closed and doctor visits skipped—young children are no longer regularly in contact with adults other than their caregivers. In normal times, the incidence of abuse and neglect of infants is **two to four times** the rate for other age groups^[ii], and **a third of children entering foster care** each year are under age three^[iii]; this has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please join us as original cosponsors for the ***Strengthening America's Families Act (SAFA)***, which supports state and local efforts to develop community-based Infant-Toddler Court Teams (ITCTs), led by judges, that work collaboratively to prevent child abuse and neglect and address the needs of young children experiencing maltreatment and their families to ensure every baby and toddler has a strong, nurturing family.

SAFA transforms child welfare practice using the latest science of child development: it builds state and local systems that support a range of comprehensive, trauma-informed infant, toddler, and family services for families in the child welfare system and where possible, those in need of preventative services. During the pandemic, ITCT's are working to ensure their families are not isolated and are connected to services and basic needs as well as creatively continuing contact between babies in foster care and their families via video to keep moving toward their reunification goals. Currently, ITCTs are in 101 sites in 30 states^[iv] but only serve a fraction of children and families in need.

The Strengthening America's Families Act will:

- Provide seed money to states to develop, stabilize and enhance Infant-Toddler Court Teams;
- Ensure that communities and states have the training and technical assistance they need to develop their programs with integrity and deliver evidence-based services; and

- Expand the reach of an already proven successful program to transform how communities and the child welfare system support the wellbeing of infants, toddlers, and families.

The ITCTs have had a measurable impact on positive outcomes for children and families as well as saved localities considerable resources. These sites are so effective that recently, the Florida legislature voted to permanently fund twenty-nine ITCT sites state wide. Measurable success:

- Maltreatment recurs in **fewer than 1 percent of ITCT cases**, an astonishingly low rate far below the national standard of 9.1 percent;
- The ITCT approach **saves more than \$14,000 per child** versus a traditional child welfare case;
- **84 percent** of infants and toddlers in the program achieved permanency within a year **compared with the national standard of 40.5 percent**; and
- A **high rate of substance use disorders**, a reason for removal for almost 70 percent of cases, did not hamper outcomes. 74 percent of parents found to need treatment started services within a week of entering the program.

Please join us by co-sponsoring the Strengthening America's Families Act and building upon the already-successful Infant-Toddler Court Team program to better coordinate child welfare services for young children and their families. To be added as a cosponsor, please fill out this [form](#) by July 1, 2020 COB. For more information please contact Marie Gualtieri in the office of Rep. Rosa DeLauro (marie.gualtieri@mail.house.gov) or Shayne Woods in the office of Rep. Gus Bilirakis (shayne.woods@mail.house.gov).

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Rep. Rosa L DeLauro

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Member of Congress

Member of Congress

^[i] “Supporting Families to Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect During the Covid-19 Pandemic.” Child Focus. May 2020.

^[ii] Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children’s Bureau. (2019).

^[iii] Ibid.

^[iv] ITCT sites in: AK, AR, AZ, CO, CT, DE, FL, HI, IA, IL, MA, MD, MI, MN, MO, MS, NC, NH, NV, NY, OH, OK, OR, SC, TN, UT, VT, WA, WI