FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS
COUNCIL FOR A STRONG AMERICA

{{Date we send to Congress}}

Dear Members of Congress:

On behalf of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, a national organization of over 5,000 police chiefs, sheriffs and prosecutors who support solutions to reduce crime and support healthy child and youth development, we urge you to **invest in evidenced-based, trauma-informed interventions and programs in early childhood education**.

We are concerned that nearly 60 percent of youth in the United States have been exposed to crime, abuse, and violence. This exposure can be in their own homes but also in their neighborhoods, schools, and broader communities. These traumatic experiences include witnessing or being a direct victim of bullying, physical and sexual abuse, physical and sexual assault, or community and school violence, including gang violence, interpersonal violence, and threats of harm. Exposure to violence often begins early, with nearly 20 percent of children ages 2-5 having witnessed violent crime.

Research has consistently shown a relationship between child victimization and juvenile offending, with several studies suggesting that 70 to 94 percent of youth involved in the juvenile justice system have histories of traumatic victimization and exposure.

Despite the prevalence of this exposure among children and youth and its intersection with youthful offending, many youth impacted by violence do not receive timely help to mitigate the harmful effects caused by this exposure. Research indicates that trauma-informed interventions integrated in our communities' child care and preschool programs can help prevent juvenile delinquency, youth involvement in the criminal justice system and other negative effects that hamper a child's healthy development. Simply put, the more healthy relationships a child has, the more likely they are to recover from trauma and thrive.

As law enforcement leaders we know first-hand the wisdom of investing in early interventions. As such, we call on Congress to **prioritize funding for existing early childhood education (ECE) programs, to implement evidence-based, trauma-informed practices** designed to create a safe, supportive, welcoming, and respectful environment. We also request that within each program, funding be dedicated to educate and train all ECE teachers and staff, including administrators, direct care staff, teachers, and support staff, about the impact of trauma, how to help children and youth establish healthy relationships and forge productive connections within our communities.

Specifically, we request prioritizing quality improvement funds to be directed to trauma initiatives within **Head Start, Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and Preschool Development Grants.** Furthermore, we call on HHS to prioritize offering technical assistance to states as they invest **TANF Title IV-E** funding in creating trauma informed communities.

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As law enforcement leaders, we strive to keep our communities safe and productive. Congress acting to invest in early childhood interventions and urging federal agencies to provide flexible guidance and strategies, will help us achieve the goal of providing interventions proven to reduce juvenile crime, create safe communities and forge a strong, productive nation.