

April 25, 2022

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education & Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education & Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education & Related Agencies
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education & Related Agencies
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Murray, Chairwoman DeLauro, Ranking Member Blunt, and Ranking Member Cole:

As organizations that care deeply about the health and safety of our nation's children, we write to request that you provide \$28.134 million in funding for the Emergency Medical Services for Children (EMSC) program at the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Labor, HHS, Education (LHHS) appropriations bill.

The EMSC program has made landmark improvements to the emergency care delivered to children all across the nation. As the only federal program dedicated to improving emergency care for children, EMSC has brought vital attention and resources to an otherwise neglected population. Congress successfully reauthorized EMSC on a bipartisan basis in 2019 through fiscal year 2024 with an authorization level of \$22.334 million. An additional \$5.8 million in funding will allow the program to provide increased funding to states to address gaps in children's access to high quality emergency and trauma care as well to support states building mental health capacity for children in emergency departments (ED).

Funding to support mental health capacity in EDs is of critical importance given the mental health issues we're seeing in children today. Emotional and behavioral health challenges were at a crisis point before the COVID-19 pandemic, and the public health emergency has acutely exacerbated these challenges, prompting the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and Children's Hospital Administration to declare a national emergency in child mental health. Already high rates of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic symptoms among children grew even faster during the pandemic, especially among young people of color. Suicide is the second leading cause of death of youth ages 10-24 in the U.S. and rates have been rising for decades. Between March and October 2020, the percentage of ED visits for children with mental health emergencies rose by 24% for children ages 5-11 and 31% for children ages 12-17. The CDC also found a more than 50% increase in suspected suicide attempt ED visits among girls ages 12-17 in early 2021 as compared to the same period

in 2019. Among female adolescents, ED visits for eating disorders doubled during the pandemic, while visits for tic disorders (i.e., sudden twitches or repeated movements) tripled.

Every state has received EMSC funds, which they have used to ensure that hospitals and ambulances are properly equipped to treat pediatric emergencies, to provide pediatric training to paramedics and first responders, and to improve the systems that allow for efficient, effective pediatric emergency medical care. Additionally, EMSC funding has helped to improve pediatric capacity and transport of pediatric patients and address emerging issues such as pediatric emergency care readiness through the National Pediatric Readiness Project and pediatric emergency medical services in rural and remote areas. Initiated in 2016, the EMSC Innovation and Improvement Center is working to accelerate improvements in the quality of care and outcomes for children who are in need of urgent or emergency care through an infrastructure that ensures routine, integrated coordination of quality improvement activities.

We are aware of the tough choices appropriators face in the current fiscal environment and appreciate continued funding of the program. As you prepare the FY 2023 LHHS appropriations bill, we respectfully request that you fund the EMSC program at \$28.134 million—the level requested in the President’s Budget.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to working with you to improve emergency medical services for children across our nation.

Sincerely,

Academic Pediatric Association
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Ambulance Association
American College of Emergency Physicians
Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago
American Pediatric Society
Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs
Children’s Health Fund
Children's Hospital Association
Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
Danny's Dose Alliance
Emergency Nurses Association
Family Voices
Intermountain Healthcare
National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians
National Association of State Emergency Medical Services Officials
National EMS Management Association
Nemours Children's Health System
Pediatric Policy Council
Primary Children's Hospital
Society for Pediatric Research
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
The Paramedic Foundation