

April 5, 2023

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education & Related Agencies  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

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

The Honorable Robert Aderholt  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education & Related Agencies  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

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

Dear Chair Baldwin, Ranking Member Capito, Chair Aderholt and Ranking Member DeLauro:

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) 2024 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 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—a call echoed by over 40 other organizations.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death for youth ages 10-18 in the United States.<sup>i</sup> In 2021, 42% of high school students reported feeling persistently sad or hopeless, and 29% reported experiencing poor mental health.<sup>ii</sup> Additionally, 20.1% of youth ages 12 - 17 had a major depressive episode in the past year, compared to only 15.7% of youth in 2019.<sup>iii</sup> 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. Behavioral health clinicians have reported

over the last several years that children and adolescents are increasingly “boarding” in emergency departments for days because they do not have sufficient supports and services.

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 (EIIC) 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. The EIIC was invaluable during the surge in pediatric respiratory illnesses seen in late 2022 that strained healthcare facilities, staff, and resources across the U.S. EIIC created recommendations and resources to support the immediate response to the surge of pediatric patients and to guide planning and preparation for future surges.

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 2024 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,

American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Ambulance Association  
American College of Emergency Physicians  
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs  
Children's Hospital Association  
Children's Hospital of Philadelphia  
Danny's Dose Alliance  
Emergency Nurses Association  
Family Voices  
March of Dimes  
National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians  
National Association of EMS Physicians (NAEMSP)  
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners  
National Association of State Emergency Medical Services Officials  
National League for Nursing  
Nemours Children’s Health  
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health  
The Paramedic Foundation

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<sup>i</sup> National Vital Statistics System. Leading Causes of Death, United States. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; 2020 <https://wisqars.cdc.gov/data/lcd/home>.

<sup>ii</sup> Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data Summary & Trends Report, 2011-2021. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; 2023. [https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/yrbs\\_data\\_summary\\_and\\_trends.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/yrbs_data_summary_and_trends.htm)

<sup>iii</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Key Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators in the United States: Results from the 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. US Department of Health and Human Services; 2020. <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/report/2019-nsduh-annual-national-report>; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Key Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators in the United States: Results from the 2021 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. US Department of Health and Human Services; 2023. <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/report/2021-nsduh-annual-national-report>