

Senator Rob Portman
446 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510



February 6, 2018

Dear Senator Portman,

Groundwork Ohio and many of our stakeholders were devastated to hear that the House failed to include the Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV) in the spending bill. And we are not alone -- it came as a shock to advocates across the state and nation that MIECHV was not included with other vital programs that required reauthorization. As you know, the MIECHV program has been widely praised by lawmakers—including leadership—on both sides of the aisle, as well as the experts and researchers who have studied the indisputable health, education, and economic benefits of voluntary home visiting services.

I know you are familiar with many of the evidence-based models where voluntary home visiting programs pair at-risk families looking for additional support and mentoring with trained home visitors such as nurses, social workers, and educators. Home visitors meet with families at home and work with parents from pregnancy through their child's kindergarten entry to help lay the foundation for the health, education, development, and economic self-sufficiency of the entire family. Visits by caring, experienced professionals can turn these good intentions into good parenting, breaking generation-long cycles of poverty, addiction, abuse and despair. Key outcomes include improvements in maternal and newborn health, reduction in child abuse and neglect, reduction in birth complications, increase in developmental screenings, increased language and literacy in children, improved Kindergarten readiness, improved family economic self-sufficiency, increased parental attainment of high school and post-high school educational attainment.

In Ohio, MIECHV support services to 27 Ohio communities. In FY17, the program provided 2,173 visits to families living in poverty and supported an additional 7,959 visits to Ohio families. Home visitors made 38,855 referrals to families for education, medical, mental health and social services. While the majority of MIECHV funding (75%) is dedicated to administering these evidence-based programs, up to 25% may be used for promising approaches with some funding reserved for research and evaluation. In Ohio, this additional money supports professional development for both state and MIECHV funded evidenced-based programs and allows for innovation to improve outcomes by targeting our most at-risk families including those impacted by the opioid epidemic.

Thank you for your continued leadership and support in ensuring that MIECHV is not forgotten as it is critical for Ohio's youngest children and their families and an economic imperative to taxpayers. At a time when our state has invested so much in promising evidenced-based home visiting, now is the time to lean in and leverage these investments which are reliant on federal leadership of this critical program. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me directly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shannon Jones". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Shannon Jones
Executive Director
Groundwork Ohio

Senator Sherrod Brown
713 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510



February 6, 2018

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Shannon Jones
Executive Director
Groundwork Ohio