Prevent Child Abuse America advocates for policies, legislation, and programs that promote healthy child development and prevent child abuse and neglect from occurring in the first place. The research is clear that investing in healthy child development reduces the likelihood of a significant array of costly ailments to the individual and to society, including chronic health problems, premature mortality, lowered educational achievement, lost productivity, mental illness, violent crime, substance abuse and addiction, and the perpetuation of abuse and neglect. In 2014, we urge the Administration and Congress to take the following actions:

1. Develop a National Strategy & Uniform Definitions for America’s Children
To more accurately understand the breadth of the issue, the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) must develop an accurate reading of abuse and neglect across all fifty states. Twenty-four states, nearly half the states across the country, only report child fatality data on children already known to CPS agencies, resulting in serious undercounting of abuse fatalities. Inconsistent state definitions of maltreatment, differing state legal standards for substantiating maltreatment, and barriers to multidisciplinary coordination compromise the ability to obtain comprehensive information on child fatalities from maltreatment. The current system reflects differing state metrics, some of which are more comprehensive than others, and ensure an incomplete picture and strategy for the prevention of abuse and neglect in the United States.

Improving the collection of data, creating standardized definitions and consistent state interpretations of maltreatment are key to devising better solutions. However, we cannot stop child abuse and neglect without a shared vision for the future. Congress and the Executive Branch should guide, plan, and coordinate the development of a national strategy and policy framework to prevent child abuse and neglect from occurring in the first place. This country needs a systematic approach, political will, coordination, and cooperation to lay the groundwork for this goal.

To that end, Prevent Child Abuse America will work in tandem with the federal Commission to Eliminate Child Abuse & Neglect Fatalities to develop recommendations for federal, state, private and public institutions, including recommendations to implement a comprehensive national strategy. We will also convene a group of experts from the state and national level to examine prevention related policies, processes and best practice standards to outline specific steps the Administration, Congress and federal agencies can take to more effectively prevent child maltreatment. Our nation must work

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together to address the social, political and economic challenges confronting a shared vision and help shape a future where America’s children can live free from abuse and neglect.

2. **Prioritize Healthy Child Development in Federal Budget Decisions**
   The Administration and Congress face difficult budgetary choices every year. Prevent Child Abuse America will work to ensure that decisions related to the federal budget maintain and, where appropriate, enhance the federal government’s commitment to healthy child development, including:

   - Ensuring that budget process and overall funding decisions enable families to meet the basic needs of their children by helping families: 1) achieve financial security; and 2) access quality services, such as health care and child care; and

   - Ensuring adequate federal funding for evidence-based services to prevent child abuse and neglect, such as early childhood home visiting, parenting education, respite care, child sexual abuse prevention, and preventing abusive head trauma. This includes fully funding:
     - The Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program;
     - The Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program (PSSF) at $338 million;
     - S.B. 1086 Child Care Development Block Grant Act of 2014 (CCDBG) at $2,282 billion;
     - Increase the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) state grant funding to $29.5 million;
     - Increase the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention grants (CB-CAP) funding to $42 million;
     - Restore funding for preventive and protective services funded by the Title IV-B, Child Welfare Services (CWS) to $281 million;
     - The Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) at $1.7 million; and,
     - The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) at $16.500 billion.

3. **Assure Long-term Reauthorization of the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program**
   Prevent Child Abuse America worked successfully with the National Home Visiting Coalition to reauthorize, for six months at level-funding of $400 million, the MIECHV program which was originally set to expire September 30, 2014. The program, which funds evidence-based home visiting for low-income children and families, has been shown to improve prenatal health and birth outcomes, early childhood health and development, school readiness and prevention of child injuries, child abuse, neglect and maltreatment. Prevent Child Abuse America will work to ensure a long term legislative solution for this important program; ideally, a full five year reauthorization.

4. **Support the Federal Commission to Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect Fatalities**
   Prevent Child Abuse America will work with our national partners, state chapters and Healthy Families America network to ensure support for the Commission’s goals to
develop a national strategy and legislative recommendations for reducing fatalities resulting from child abuse and neglect [P.L. 112-275]. We will provide input, research, and advocacy efforts to ensure the Commission’s recommendations for legislation and administrative action include prevention strategies that will increase safety, decrease child abuse and neglect and improve reporting.

5. Promote Public Awareness & Enhance Coalition Support
Looking ahead, Prevent Child Abuse America will work with the Administration, Congress, stakeholders and our national coalitions, to ensure important programs, services and funding are protected through:

- **Reauthorization of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)** funded until October 1, 2015. According to the Congressional Budget Office estimates, inaction by Congress would result in 12.7 million children enrolled in FY 2015 being at risk of losing their CHIP coverage in 2016.

- **Reauthorization of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA)** which expires in 2015. CAPTA is the only federal legislation exclusively targeting prevention, assessment, identification, and treatment of child abuse and neglect. It is also the only federal legislation providing for universal primary prevention of child abuse and neglect capacity building. While the law does not change the federal definition of neglect, it strongly encourages states to review their state laws, practices, policies, and procedures to ensure children are protected.

- **Monitoring outcomes of the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Evaluation (MIHOPE).** The Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Evaluation (MIHOPE) is a legislatively-mandated evaluation of the MIECHV program. The evaluation uses a randomized controlled design to determine outcomes the home visiting program is making. The evaluation seeks to measure the effect of early childhood home visiting programs on child and parent outcomes, measure how effects vary for different programs and populations, and the cost of operating the programs. This study will include 85 program sites and 5,100 families in twelve states nationwide. Sites in the evaluation will operate one of four models: Early Head Start-Home Visiting, Healthy Families America, Nurse Family Partnership, and Parents as Teachers.

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