**State/Funder Advocacy**- Sample Letter

**Purpose**: HFA has developed the sample letter/email language below to support sites or systems in advocacy efforts to state and local legislators, school boards, and philanthropic funders. Sites and systems should edit and add to this letter information pertaining to the specific communities served and needs within their programs.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,

My name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I represent the Healthy Families America (HFA) site, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. I am reaching out to request your support for home visiting programs in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(community/state?) during the current COVID-19 crisis. Home Visiting is Essential! <additional information here about site and role>

**What is a Home Visit?**

Voluntary **home visiting** programs are a prevention strategy used to support pregnant moms and new parents as they manage the stress of child rearing in the context of other life challenges. Trained professionals partner with families to provide personal support, critical information, and connection to community resources for parents from pregnancy through their children’s first years of life.

HFA is the nationally-recognized, evidence-based home visiting program of Prevent Child Abuse America®. HFA supports families in the home and focuses on building nurturing, safe and secure relationships between parent and child to maximize opportunities for all children –and parents– to reach their full potential.

**Home visiting** programs help new and expectant parents **develop the skills and confidence** it takes to raise healthy families.  Home visiting **prevents adversity** and **builds resilience** during a child’s most critical years of development, shown by reduced child abuse and neglect, fewer low birth weight babies, and improved school readiness for children.

**Who does HFA serve?**

All families can benefit from support, and for parents living in poverty and facing other risk factors, the access to support and resources that home visiting programs provide becomes even more critical.

In this current environment, families are experiencing greater stress. Now more than ever, support from a trusted home visitor is crucial to family and child health and well-being. Families remain connected through virtual home visiting while reducing community spread of coronavirus. We know that this sustained connection reduces families’ experiences of stress and isolation at this time making a difference in their capacity to cope with the stress of parenting during the pandemic.

**What role do home visitors serve?**

Home visitors play an important role in connecting families to community resources, Staff from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ <site or system name> are working with families struggling during this pandemic crisis to obtain basic items for their infants and young children such as diapers, milk, child care, income support, and even transportation to get necessities. There is great anxiety within families right now, many of whom lack resources to effectively navigate stress and chaos, and home visitors have been there to discuss coping strategies, link to health care resources, and offer support services. The relationships built between HFA home visitors and the overburdened families they support give families a place to find calm in the storm, allowing them to be fully available to their children during this stressful time.

Home visiting programs cannot continue their work in <state or community> if their jobs are eliminated or hours are cut. We ask for your <continued> commitment to support home visiting as a vital resource for all families during this crisis, including:

1. Recognize virtual home visits. State and local funders should follow the lead of model developers such as Healthy Families America in recognizing that a visit conducted remotely (via phone or video) counts as a “home visit” for program when program guidelines are followed.
2. Stabilize funding. Localized and widespread community challenges may result in HFA programs being unable to enroll new families for a period of time, or may put sites in a position where some families must move to a service level that requires less visits. Funding for sites and staffing levels for home visiting programs should not be reduced as a result of reduced enrollment or caseload sizes during this crisis. Sites that are fully staffed serve an important role for families in the community, including those not yet enrolled in services or no longer able to be visited as frequently.
3. Maintain the workforce. Funders of home visiting should commit to continuing to pay home visitors during this crisis, even if they are unable to complete home visits. Retaining experienced and well-trained staff through this temporary crisis will result in a quicker return to full services once the crisis has passed and a greater rate of family retention.

We are grateful for your support for <site or system name here>, now and in the future. Home Visiting is Essential and now, more than ever, with public health at risk and the social safety net stretched even further, home visitors need flexibility and additional resources. Sustaining HFA home visiting programs as they weather the storm of the COVID-19 pandemic will contribute to the wellbeing of the most vulnerable families and children in our communities.