



February 22, 2017

New Mexico House of Representatives
State Capitol
290 Old Santa Fe Trail
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Dear Representative,

As members of the nonprofit national security organization, MISSION: READINESS, we would like to express our support for voluntary home visiting programs in the state of New Mexico. MISSION: READINESS is the organization of more than 650 retired admirals and generals who are deeply concerned about the state of country's youth. According to the Department of Defense, 71 percent of America's youth – and 73 percent in New Mexico – are ineligible for military service because they are too poorly educated, too overweight, and/or have a record of crime or drug abuse. Too many of New Mexico's young people do not have the option to serve, and we are concerned that our national security will be at risk unless we make smart investments in New Mexico's youth that prepare them to be citizen-ready.

MISSION: READINESS supports increased funding for research-based investments like home visiting programs that are proven to help America's youth get on the right track early in life. The state of New Mexico has recognized the value of voluntary home visiting programs; however, there is still a lot of work to be done. In a letter signed by law enforcement leaders of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, we learned that more than 7,600 boys and girls were abused or neglected in 2014 alone – a worrisome statistic that may be indicative of more crime down the road. When research-based home visiting programs are proven to cut the number of abuse and neglect cases in half, it is imperative that we champion and expand these programs to reach more children across the state of New Mexico.

It is also important to recognize the academic benefits of home visiting programs. For example, research shows the Healthy Families America program reduced the number of children who needed special education in elementary school by 26 percent, and increased the number of children in the range of normal cognitive development while also reducing the number of children with behavior problems. By investing in voluntary home visiting programs, New Mexico's children will have a greater opportunity to become better educated and avoid a life of crime, enabling them to qualify for a career in the military if they so choose.

We must never forget that the strength of our Nation's military lies first and foremost with our people. As retired generals, we want to ensure that New Mexico's children do not continue down a path of crime and neglect by increasing funding for evidence-based home visiting programs.

Very respectfully,

Handwritten signature of Jerry W. Grizzle in blue ink.

Major General (Ret.) Jerry W. Grizzle
U.S. Army
Roswell

Handwritten signature of Douglas J. Murray in blue ink.

Brigadier General (Ret.) Douglas J. Murray
U.S. Air Force
Roswell

Handwritten signature of Regner C. Rider in blue ink.

Brigadier General (Ret.) Regner C.
Rider
U.S. Air Force
Albuquerque

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