April 16, 2020

The Honorable Brian Schatz
722 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Schatz:

On behalf of the Safe States Alliance, we greatly appreciate your leadership in circulating a “Dear Colleague” letter urging support for a $20 million allocation in the FY 2020 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill to expand the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) Core State Violence and Injury Prevention Program (SVIPP).

Injuries in Hawaii are responsible for more deaths from the first year of life through age 40 than all other causes combined, including heart disease, stroke, and cancer. Among residents of all ages, injury is the fourth leading cause of death and disability. The vast majority of injuries, however, are non-fatal and can lead to a range of outcomes, including temporary pain and inconvenience, disability, chronic pain, or a complete change in lifestyle. During an average week in Hawaii: 15 residents die from an injury, 103 are hospitalized, and nearly 1,640 are treated in emergency departments.

While the greatest impact of injury is in human suffering, the financial cost is staggering. In Hawaii, medical treatment for injuries generates nearly $455 million in hospital charges.

The Core SVIPP is designed to help states, such as Hawaii, implement, evaluate and disseminate strategies that advance targeted injury and violence prevention programs. It is the only program of its kind that uses research-based evidence to identify the most effective strategies to prevent injuries and violence at the community level. The overall purpose of the Core SVIPP is to decrease injury and violence-related morbidity and mortality, and increase sustainability of injury prevention programs and practices.

Unfortunately, only 23 states benefit from Core SVIPP support and grants are capped at $250,000.00 – precious little to have a meaningful impact on the leading cause of death for young Americans. Your efforts to increase Core SVIPP funds to $20 million will allow current grantees to benefit from additional funds, while allowing more states to join the program.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize and give special thanks to Meghan O’Toole for her commitment and attention to the needs of the injury and violence prevention community. We recognize she has many competing demands on her time and appreciate her efforts on your behalf.
We look forward to working with you to expand support for the Core SVIPP so that states such as Hawaii can strengthen their injury and violence prevention efforts. If you wish to discuss this further, please contact Paul Bonta, our Director of Government Relations at Paul.Bonta@safestates.org.

Sincerely,

Richard Hamburg
Executive Director