

September , 2008

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
528 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
61-A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Office of the Speaker
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Boehner
Office of the House Republican Leader
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators Reid and McConnell and Representatives Pelosi and Boehner:

We are writing to urge you to take necessary steps to ensure passage this month of important improvements in supports for children and youth in foster care, including new opportunities for permanent families through adoption and relative guardianship and other assistance for older youth transitioning from foster care. As you know, the House unanimously passed the Fostering Connections to Success Act in June and the Senate provisions are moving toward final passage. As more than _____ hundred national, state and local organizations in every state that advocate for children and youth who will benefit from these improvements, we want to ensure that they are passed during this session of Congress.

Both the House bill and Senate provisions have bipartisan support and are fully paid for. Both also include the following important improvements that will help hundreds of thousands of children in foster care by:

- Extending and increasing incentives for adoption, particularly incentives for the adoption of children with special needs and older youth in foster care.
- Allowing states to offer for the first time federal assistance for guardianship payments for children who are in foster care but who have grandparents or other relative guardians who want to care for them permanently outside of foster care.
- Making it easier for immediate relatives to step in to raise children when their parents cannot by requiring notification of relatives when children are removed from their parents and grants to link caregivers with the services their children need.
- Offering important protections and supports for American Indian children in foster care, by allowing tribes, for the first time, the same direct access to federal foster care, adoption assistance and relative guardianship funding that states have.
- Increasing opportunities for success for older youth in foster care as they transition into adult life by allowing them to continue to receive federal foster care payments beyond the age of 18.
- Improve educational opportunities for children and youth in foster care, which will also increase their opportunities for later success.

All of these reforms encompass many of the critical improvements that hundreds of former foster youth, adoptive parents, relative caregivers, and others have been requesting of Congress for several years. We commend you for your leadership and commitment to addressing the needs of our nation's most vulnerable children and youth. The organizations listed below support timely enactment of these important improvements for children and youth in foster care:

Respectfully yours,

National Organizations

Adopt America Network
Alliance for Children and Families
American Academy for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Academy of Adoption Attorneys
American Association of Children's Residential Centers
American Humane Association
The Arc of the U.S.
Association on American Indian Affairs
Black Administrators in Child Welfare, Inc.
Center for Law and Social Policy
Child Welfare League of America
Children Awaiting Parents
Children's Action Network
Children's Defense Fund
Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption
Family Violence Prevention Fund
First Focus
Foster Care Alumni of America
Foster Family-based Treatment Association
FosterClub
GrandFamilies of America
Generations United
Holt International
The Kids are Waiting: Fix Foster Care Now Campaign
Mental Health America
National African-American Drug Policy Coalition, Inc.
National Alliance to End Homelessness
National Association of Black Social Workers
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association of County Human Services Administrators
National Association of Counties
National CASA Association
National Child Abuse Coalition
National Children's Alliance
National Collaboration for Youth
National Foster Care Coalition
National Indian Child Welfare Association
National Network for Youth
National Policy Partnership for Children of the Incarcerated
North American Council on Adoptable Children
The Rebecca Project for Human Rights
Specialized Alternatives for Families and Youth of America
Teaching-Family Association
United Cerebral Palsy
United Neighborhood Centers of America
Voice for Adoption
Voices for America's Children
Zero to Three

Alabama

Gateway (Birmingham, AL)
VOICES for Alabama's Children (Montgomery, AL)

Alaska

Alaska Center for Resource Families (Fairbanks, AK)
Alaska Children's Services, Inc. (Anchorage, AK)
Boys and Girls Home of Alaska (Fairbanks, AK)
Denali Family Services (Anchorage, AK)
Dept. of Health and Social Service, Office of Children's Services (Juneau, AK)
Juneau Youth Services (Juneau, AK)

Arizona

Arizona Council of Human Service Providers (Phoenix, AZ)
Arizona Department of Economic Security (Phoenix, AZ)
Child and Family Resources, Inc. (Tucson, AZ)
Children's Action Alliance (Phoenix, AZ)
Coconino Coalition for Children and Youth (Flagstaff, AZ)
Crisis Nursery, Inc. (Phoenix, AZ)
Free Arts of Arizona (Phoenix, AZ)
Prevent Child Abuse Arizona (Prescott, AZ)
Protecting Arizona's Family Coalition (Phoenix, AZ)
Touchstone Behavioral Health (Glendale, AZ)
Tumbleweed Center for Youth Development (Phoenix, AZ)
West Valley Child Crisis Center (Glendale, AZ)

Arkansas

Arkansas Advocates for Children (Little Rock, AR)
Arkansas State CASA Association (Little Rock, AR)
Arkansas Voices for Children and Caregivers (Little Rock, AR)

California

Advocates 4 Family Caregivers (Carson, CA)
Alternative Family Services (Santa Rosa, CA)
Boys Town California (Santa Ana, CA)
California Alliance of Child and Family Services (Sacramento, CA)
California State Association of Counties (Sacramento, CA)
Charis Youth Center (Grass Valley, CA)
Children's Law Center of Los Angeles (Los Angeles, CA)
The Children's Village of Sonoma County (Santa Rosa, CA)
Concept 7 Family Support & Treatment Center (Santa Ana, CA)
County of Santa Clara Social Services Agency (San Jose, CA)
County Welfare Directors Association of California (Sacramento, CA)
Crossroads Treatment Center (Citrus Heights, CA)

David & Margaret Youth & Family Services (La Verne, CA)
Del Norte County Department of Health and Human Services (Crescent City, CA)
EMQ Children and Family Services (Campbell, CA)
Five Acres-The Boys' and Girls' Aid Society of L.A. (Altadena, CA)
Greater Hope Foundation Foster Family Agency (Barstow, CA)
Hathaway-Sycamores Child and Family Services (Pasadena, CA)
HUGS Foster Family Agency (Terrebonne, CA)
Kinship Center (Salinas, CA)
Lilliput Children's Services (Sacramento, CA)
The Lincoln Center (Oakland, CA)
Masonic Homes of CA at Covina (Covina, CA)
Office of Samoan Affairs (Carson, CA)
Olive Crest (Santa Ana, CA)
Pacific Lodge Youth Services (Woodland Hills, CA)
Phoenix Houses of CA (Lake View Terrace, CA)
Rebekah Children's Services (Gilroy, CA)
The Salvation Army, Door of Hope (San Diego, CA)
San Luis Obispo County Department of Social Services (San Luis Obispo, CA)
Sierra Adoption Services (Sacramento, CA)
Sierra Vista Child & Family Services (Modesto, CA)
Sunny Hills Services (San Anselmo, CA)
TLC Child & Family Services (Sebastopol, CA)
Triad Family Services (Colton, CA)
Trinity Youth Services (Colton, CA)
Walden Family Services, Inc. (San Diego, CA)
WestCoast Children's Clinic (Oakland, CA)
Youth for Change (Paradise, CA)
Youth Homes, Inc. (Walnut Creek, CA)

Colorado

CASA Advocates for Children, Colorado (Aurora, CO)
Colorado Children's Campaign (Denver, CO)
Colorado Coalition of Adoptive Families (Louisville, CO)
Gilpin County Department of Human Services (Black Hawk, CO)

Connecticut

Connecticut Association of Foster and Adoptive Parents (Rocky Hill, CT)
Connecticut Council of Family Service Agencies (Wethersfield, CT)
Klingberg Family Centers, Inc. (New Britain, CT)

Delaware

Child, Inc. (Wilmington, DE)
GrandParents United DE, Inc. (Hockessin, DE)

District of Columbia

The Children's Law Center (Washington, DC)
Consortium for Child Welfare (Washington, DC)
Covenant House Washington (Washington, DC)
DC Metropolitan Foster and Adoptive Parent Association (Washington, DC)

Florida

Adoption Related Services of Pinellas (Pinellas, FL)
Children's Home Society of FL (Winter Park, FL)
Everyday Blessings (Thonotosassa, FL)
Family Resources, Inc. (Pinellas Park, FL)
Family Service Centers, Inc. (Clearwater, FL)
Florida Consumer Action Network (Tampa, FL)
Florida State Foster Adoptive Parent Association (Venice, FL)
Gulf Coast Jewish Family Services (Clearwater, FL)
Northeast Florida Parent/Adopted Association (Jacksonville, FL)
Partnership for Strong Families (Gainesville, FL)

Georgia

Families First (Atlanta, GA)
Fulton County Human Services Dept. Office of Children and Youth (Atlanta, GA)
Georgia Association of Homes and Services for Children (Atlanta, GA)
ROOTS, Inc. (Hapeville, GA)

Hawaii

Hawaii Foster Parent Association (Honolulu, HI)

Idaho

BSU Child Welfare Center (Boise, ID)
Idaho Children's Trust Fund/Prevent Child Abuse Idaho (Boise, ID)
Idaho Head Start Association (Boise, ID)
Idaho KINCARE Coalition (Boise, ID)
Treasure Valley Grandparents as Parents (Boise, ID)

Illinois

Allendale Association (Lake Villa, IL)
The Baby Fold (Normal, IL)
Child Care Association of Illinois (Springfield, IL)
Children's Home + Aid (Chicago, IL)
Matthews and Associates (Herrin, IL)
Methodist Youth Services, Inc. (Chicago, IL)
Northwestern University Settlement Association (Chicago, IL)

Indiana

IARCCA, An Association of Children and Family Services (Indianapolis, IN)
Scott County Partnership, Inc. (Scottsburg, IN)

Iowa

Boys and Girls Home and Family Services (Sioux City, IA)
Family Resources, Inc. (Davenport, IA)
Iowa Foster and Adoptive Parents Association (Ankeny, IA)
Orchard Place (Des Moines, IA)

Kansas

Children's Alliance of Kansas (Topeka, KS)
KF & AC Kansas Foster and Adoption Corporation (Overland Park, KS)

Kentucky

Adoption Support for Kentucky (Lexington, KY)
Boys' Haven (Louisville, KY)
Brooklawn Child & Family Services (Louisville, KY)
Campbell Lodge Boys' Home (Cold Spring, KY)
The Children's Alliance (Frankfort, KY)
Giving Love Understanding and Encouragement (GLUE) (Louisville, KY)
The Grandparent Connection (Vine Grove, KY)
Holly Hill Children's Services (California, KY)
Necco (Lexington, KY)
Open Arms Grandparents/Acting Parents Raising Children Support Group (Elizabethtown, KY)
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Central Leadership (Nazareth, KY)
Sunrise Children's Services (Mt. Washington, KY)

Louisiana

Open Arms Adoption Services, Inc. (Shreveport, LA)

Maine

Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine (Old Town, ME)
Families and Children Together (Bangor, ME)
Maine Children's Alliance (August, ME)

Maryland

Board of Child Care (Baltimore, MD)
Citizens' Review Board for Children (Baltimore, MD)
Sheridan Patterson Center for Holistic Family Services, Inc. (Baltimore, MD)
Solutions for Children and Caregivers of Maryland, Inc. (Thurmont, MD)

Massachusetts

Adoption Community of New England, Inc. (Westborough, MA)
Cambridge Family & Children's Service (Cambridge, MA)

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Boston, Inc. (Boston, MA)
Children's Friend & Family Service (Salem, MA)
Children's League of Massachusetts (Boston, MA)
GrandParents Raising Grandchildren, Plymouth Council of Aging (Plymouth, MA)
Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange (Boston, MA)
Massachusetts Alliance for Families (Winchendon, MA)

Michigan

Bethany Christian Services (Grand Rapids, MI)
Catholic Social Services of Wayne County (Detroit, MI)
Child and Family Services of Northwestern Michigan (Traverse City, MI)
Eagle Village (Hersey, MI)
Holy Cross Children's Services (Clinton, MI)
Lutheran Child & Family Service of Michigan (Bay City, MI)
Michigan County Social Services Association (Lansing, MI)
Michigan's Children (Lansing, MI)
Spaulding for Children (Southfield, MI)
Starr Commonwealth (Albion, MI)

Minnesota

The City, Inc. (Minneapolis, MN)
Hennepin Human Services and Public Health Department, Adoption Program (Minnetonka, MN,)
Minnesota Council of Child Caring Agencies (St. Paul, MN)
Minnesota Kinship Caregivers Association (St. Paul, MN)
Therapeutic Services Agency (Pine City, MN)
Phyllis Wheatley Community Center (Minneapolis, MN)

Mississippi

Catholic Charities, Inc. of MS (Jackson, MS)
Harden House Adoption/Foster Care Program (Jackson, MS)

Missouri

Butterfield Youth Services (Marshall, MO)
Child Advocacy Services Center (Kansas City, MO)
Cornerstones of Care (Kansas City, MO)
Crittenton Children's Center (Kansas City, MO)
Epworth (St. Louis, MO)
Family Resource Center (St. Louis, MO)
Missouri Coalition of Children's Agencies (Jefferson City, MO)
The Master's House (Kansas City, MO)
Partnership for Children (Kansas City, MO)
Saint Vincent Home for Children (St. Louis, MO)

Montana

Big Sky Foster/Adoptive Parent Association
(Helena, MT)
Intermountain (Helena, MT)
Montana Children's Initiative Provider Association
(Billings, MT)
Montana State Foster Adoptive Parent
Association (Stevensville, MT)
Summit Preparatory School (Kalispell, MT)
Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch (Billings, MT)

Nebraska

Boys and Girls Home of Nebraska (South Sioux
City, NE)
Boys Town (Boys Town, NE)
Child Saving institute (Omaha, NE)
Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public
Interest (Lincoln, NE)
Voices for Children in Nebraska (Omaha, NE)

Nevada

Reaching Our Community's Kids (R.O.C.K.) (Las
Vegas, NV)

New Hampshire

Children's Alliance of New Hampshire (Concord,
NH)

New Jersey

Association for Children of New Jersey (Newark,
NJ)
The Bridge, Inc. (Caldwell, NJ)
Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton (Trenton,
NJ)
Children's Aid and Family Services, Inc.
(Paramus, NJ)
Corporation for Supportive Housing (Trenton, NJ)
The Crisis Ministry (Trenton, NJ)
Family Service Association of New Jersey
(Trenton, NJ)
Family Voices of NJ (Newark, NJ)
New Jersey Alliance for Children Youth and
Families (Hamilton Square, NJ)
Robins' Nest (Glassboro, NJ)
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network of New
Jersey (Newark, NJ)

New Mexico

Outcomes, Inc.: Grandparents Raising
Grandchildren (Albuquerque, NM)
New Mexico CASA Network (Albuquerque, NM)
New Mexico Child Advocacy Network
(Albuquerque, NM)
PB&J Family Services, Inc. (Albuquerque, NM)

New York

The Children's Aid Society (NY, NY)

The Children's Village (Dobbs Ferry, NY)
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York
(NY, NY)
City of New York Administration for Children's
Services (NY, NY)
City of New York Department for the Aging (NY,
NY)
City of New York Department of for Youth and
Community Development (NY, NY)
Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies
(NY, NY)
Grandparents Advocacy Project, Inc. (Bronx, NY)
Greene County Foster and Adoptive Families
Association (Catskill, NY)
Hillside Family of Agencies (Rochester, NY)
Jewish Child Care Association (NY, NY)
LaSalle School (Albany, NY)
Liberty Resources, Inc. (Syracuse, NY)
Lutheran Social Services of New York (NY, NY)
McQuade Children's Services (Windsor, NY)
NYS Association of Family Service Agencies
(Poughkeepsie, NY)
NYS Citizens' Coalition for Children, Inc.
(Brooklyn, NY)
NYS Kinship Navigator (Rochester, NY)
NYS Office of Children and Families (Albany, NY)
Parsons Child and Family Center (Albany, NY)
Prevent Child Abuse New York (Albany, NY)
Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy
(Albany, NY)
Social Justice Center at Stony Brook University
School of Social Welfare (Stony Brook, NY)
St. Matthew's & St. Timothy's Neighborhood
Center, Inc. (NY, NY)

North Carolina

Action for Children North Carolina (Raleigh, NC)
Buncombe County Department of Social Services
(Asheville, NC)
Children and Family Services Association
(Raleigh, NC)
Children's Home Society of NC (Greensboro,
NC)
Durham County Department of Social Services
(Durham, NC)
Jackson County Department of Social Services
(Sylva, NC)

North Dakota

Adults Adopting Special Kids (Fargo, ND)
Catholic Charities North Dakota (Fargo, ND)
PATH ND, Inc. (Fargo, ND)

Ohio

Adams County Children Services (West
Union, OH)
Allen County Children Services (Lima, OH)
Alliance of Child Caring Service Providers
(Cleveland, OH)
Athens County Children Services (Athens, OH)

Clark County Job and Family Services
(Springfield, OH)
Clinton County Job & Family Services
(Wilmington, OH)
County Commissioners Association of Ohio
(Columbus, OH)
Defiance County Job and Family Services
(Defiance, OH)
Erie County Job and Family Services (Sandusky,
OH)
Fairfield County Job & Family Services
(Lancaster, OH)
Franklin County Children Services (Columbus,
OH)
Fulton County Job and Family Services
(Wauseon, OH)
Greene County Children Services (Xenia, OH)
Guernsey County Children Services (Cambridge,
OH)
Hamilton County Job and Family Services
(Cincinnati, OH)
Heart to Heart Family Support Center (Akron,
OH)
Highland County Children Services (Hillsboro,
OH)
Kinship Navigator, the Rehabilitation Center of
NCO (Mansfield, OH)
Lucas County Children Services (Toledo, OH)
Medina County Job & Family Services (Medina,
OH)
National Alliance of Mental Illness of Ohio
(Columbus, OH)
National Council of Jewish Women, Ohio
(Cleveland, OH)
Necco (South Point, OH)
Northeast Ohio Adoption Services (Warren, OH)
Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging
(Columbus, OH)
Ohio Association of Child Caring Agencies
(Columbus, OH)
Ohio Child Support Enforcement Directors
Association (Columbus, OH)
Ohio Council of Churches (Columbus, OH)
Ohio Department of Job and Family Services,
Office for Children and Families (Columbus,
OH)
Ohio Job & Family Services Directors Association
(Columbus, OH)
Ohio Society for Respiratory Care (Columbus,
OH)
Ohio Statewide Independent Living Council
(Gahanna, OH)
Pathway Caring for Children (North Canton, OH)
Pickaway County Job & Family Services
(Circleville, OH)
Preble County Job and Family Services (Eaton
OH)
Public Children Services Association of Ohio
(Columbus, OH)
Stark County Job and Family Services (Canton,
OH)
Starr Commonwealth (Columbus, OH)
Summit County Children Services (Akron, OH)

Tuscarawas County Job & Family Services
(New Philadelphia, OH)
Van Wert County Job & Family Services
(Van Wert, OH)
Voices for Ohio's Children (Cleveland, OH)
Washington County Children Services
(Marietta, OH)
Wayne County Children Services Board
(Wooster, OH)
Wendy's Wonderful Kids, Franklin County
(Columbus, OH)

Oklahoma

Oklahoma Therapeutic Foster Care Association
(Norman, OK)

Oregon

Baker County CASA, Inc. (Baker City, OR)
Children First for Oregon (Portland, OR)
FosterClub (Seaside, OR)
Southern Oregon Adolescent Study and
Treatment Center (Grants Pass, OR)
Oregon Alliance of Children's Programs (Salem,
OR)

Pennsylvania

Allegheny County Department of Human
Services (Pittsburgh, PA)
Methodist Home for Children (Philadelphia, PA)
Grands as Parents, Inc. (Philadelphia, PA)
Family and Community Service of Delaware
County (Media, PA)
FLOC- For Love of Children (Morrisville, PA)
Kinship Institute, Philadelphia Society for
Services to Children (Philadelphia, PA)
PathWaysPA (Holmes, PA)
Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children
(Harrisburg, PA)
Pressley Ridge (Pittsburgh, PA)
The Salvation Army Children's Services
(Allentown, PA)
Three Rivers Adoption Council (Pittsburgh, PA)
Together as Adoptive Parents (Harleysville, PA)
United Way of Beaver County (Monaca, PA)

Rhode Island

Neighborhood Alliance of Pawtucket (Pawtucket,
RI)
Rhode Island Foster Parents Association (East
Providence, RI)

South Carolina

Adoption Advocacy (Greenville, SC)
Children Unlimited of Family Service Center
(Columbia, SC)
Growing Home Southeast (Cayce, SC)

South Dakota

Association on American Indian Affairs (Sisseton, SD)

Tennessee

Coalition Addressing Juvenile Issues (Jacksboro, TN)
REACHS, Inc. (Jacksboro, TN)

Texas

Center for Public Policy Priorities (Austin, TX)
CHILDREN AT RISK (Houston, TX)
The Children's Shelter (San Antonio, TX)
Dallas Minority Adoption Council (Dallas, TX)
DePelchin Children's Center (Houston, TX)
Family Services of Southeast Texas (Beaumont, TX)
Spaulding for Children in Texas (Houston, TX)
Texas Care for Children (Austin, TX)

Utah

The Adoption Exchange (Murray, UT)
The Christmas Box International (Salt Lake City, UT)

Vermont

Vermont Foster and Adoptive Family Association (Essex Junction, VT)
Vermont Kin as Parents (Winooski, VT)

Virginia

Franklin County Office of Comprehensive Services (Rocky Mount, VA)
The Law Center for Children (Falls Church, VA)
The Up Center (Norfolk, VA)

Washington

Catholic Family & Child Service (Yakima, WA)
Children's Home Society of Washington (Seattle, WA)
Southeast Youth and Family Services (Seattle, WA)

West Virginia

Braley & Thompson, Inc. (Dunbar, WV)
Children's Home Society of West Virginia (Charleston, WV)

Wisconsin

La Crosse County Human Services (La Crosse, WI)
Madison Department of Children and Families (Madison, WI)
St. Rose Youth & Family Center (Milwaukee, WI)
Voices United, Inc. (Milwaukee, WI)
Wisconsin Association of Family and Children's Agencies (Madison, WI)

Wyoming

AppleTree Learning Center (Casper, WY)
Wyoming Children's Action Alliance (Cheyenne, WY)