

August 12, 2020

The Honorable Danny K. Davis  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Worker and Family  
Support  
Committee on Ways and Means  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jackie Walorski  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Worker and Family  
Support  
Committee on Ways and Means  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Davis and Ranking Member Walorski:

We, the undersigned organizations, write to express our strong support for the *Supporting Foster Youth and Families through the Pandemic Act (H.R. 7947)*. As organizations dedicated to the safety and well-being of children, youth and families who are in – or at risk of entering – the child welfare system, we are deeply grateful for your demonstrated leadership and thoughtful response to the urgent needs of these families.

The COVID-19 pandemic is placing unprecedented stress on children, youth, and families as they navigate social distancing, job losses, uncertain childcare arrangements, school closures, social isolation, and significant barriers to many critical support services. While state and local leaders across the country have worked tirelessly to continue vital services for those involved with the child welfare system, the ongoing public health emergency presents new and complex challenges for families and the agencies that serve them.

The *Supporting Foster Youth and Families through the Pandemic Act* presents a bold plan to confront the serious needs of children, youth, and families across the child welfare continuum as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Once enacted, it will provide much-needed resources and tools that support struggling families, keep children safe, and help youth thrive during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Specifically, the *Supporting Foster Youth and Families through the Pandemic Act* would:

- **Provide a \$400 million investment in the John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition to Adulthood to help older youth successfully transition from foster care to adulthood and maintain their health during the pandemic.** Older youth who have made tremendous progress toward successful adulthood, often without the support of family, are seeing that progress upended by the economic impact of the pandemic. The bill will help mitigate the daily challenges facing these young people by providing \$350 million for the Independent Living program and \$50 million for Education and Training Vouchers (ETV), extending Chafee eligibility until age 27, lifting the cap on allowable housing expenditures under the Chafee Program and raising the maximum ETV awards to \$12,000. This bill also keeps more young people connected to supports and safe housing by preventing youth from “aging out” of foster care and allowing youth who have

already aged out on their own during the pandemic to re-enter care. Now more than ever, extended foster care is a life line for young people as it provides them with the safety and security of knowing they can maintain their current living arrangements and services and ensures they will be in the best position to stay healthy and continue working towards their goals for their future.

- **Raise the federal match rate for the Title IV-E Prevention Program to 100 percent.** The COVID-19 pandemic creates many new stressors for vulnerable families and communities need the tools and resources to offer prevention and early intervention services to help families remain safe and healthy. Increasing investment in the Title IV-E Prevention Program builds on important reform efforts already underway across the country and will allow states, tribes, and territories to act swiftly to provide evidence-based, trauma-informed mental health and substance use treatment and in-home skill-based parenting programs to help keep families strong and keep children safely at home with their families.
- **Provide \$85 million for the MaryLee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program, with \$10 million set aside for Court Improvement Programs.** A targeted investment of federal funds into Title IV-B, Part 2, the MaryLee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program will give communities the flexibility they need to boost investments in services and programs to support birth, foster, adoptive and kinship families during this challenging time. Court Improvement Program funding will help mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the functioning of the child welfare courts, such as enhancements in technology to ensure timely hearings and avoid delays in reunification and other legal proceedings to achieve permanency.
- **Help relatives caring for children by increasing the federal share for Kinship Navigator Programs.** Grandparents and other relatives who step in to raise children and keep them safely with family and out of foster care, face unique challenges during this COVID crisis. These relative caregivers are often older and are particularly vulnerable to the virus and are struggling to safely access basic food, medicine, and supplies without exposing themselves to the virus. By increasing the federal share for Kinship Navigators to 100 percent and temporarily waiving the evidence standard required for federal reimbursement, this bill creates stronger flexibility to reach more kinship caregivers and provide them with access to resources and information they need to safely care for children.
- **Provide flexibilities for home visiting programs to continue serving families safely.** Allowing for necessary adaptations to ensure that young parents can continue to receive home visiting services will ensure that funding for these vital programs will not be reduced because of measures taken to ensure safety of home visiting staff and clients. Delaying deadlines and providing programmatic flexibility allow home visiting programs to adapt to the public health crisis while safely providing necessary supports to families.

At this critical juncture in Congressional negotiations for the next COVID relief proposal, we appreciate your leadership and commitment to ensuring communities have the resources they need to support vulnerable children, youth and families. As negotiations move forward for the next COVID-19 relief package we strongly urge Congress to include the critical provisions in the bipartisan *Supporting Foster Youth and Families through the Pandemic Act* so more children, youth, and families have the supports and services they need to remain safe, stable and healthy.

Sincerely,

### **National Organizations**

Alliance for Strong Families and Communities  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
Association of Children's Residential Centers (ACRC)  
Bethany Christian Services  
Boys Town  
Campaign for Trauma-Informed Policy and Practice  
Center for the Study of Social Policy  
CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers  
Child Protection Connection  
Children and Family Futures  
Children's Advocacy Institute  
Children's Defense Fund  
Children's Rights, Inc.  
Children's Trust Fund Alliance  
Family Centered Treatment Foundation  
Family Equality  
Family Focused Treatment Association  
Foster Care Alumni of America  
Foster Youth in Action  
FosterClub  
Friends of the Children  
Generations United  
Juvenile Law Center  
Lutheran Services in America  
National Association of Counsel for Children  
National Association of County Human Services Administrators  
National Center for Transgender Equality  
National Center for Youth Law  
National Center on Adoption and Permanency  
National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges  
National Crittenton  
National Equality Action Team (NEAT)  
National Foster Parent Association  
ParentalRights.org  
Partnership for America's Children  
Saint Francis Ministries  
The Ounce of Prevention Fund

The Trevor Project  
Think of Us  
Voice for Adoption  
YMCA of Greater Seattle  
Youth Villages

### **State Organizations**

Acenda Inc.  
ACTION Ohio  
Addiction Connections Resource  
Adoption Rhode Island  
Adoptive and Foster Families of Maine, Inc. & The Kinship Program  
Adoptive and Foster Family Coalition of New York  
Advocates for Ohio's Future  
Advokids  
Alaska Children's Trust  
Alexandria/Arlington CASA  
Allendale Association  
AspireMN  
Association of Community Human Service Agencies  
C.B. Community Schools  
CACs Head Start  
Carlton Manor Inc.  
Case Western Reserve University Schubert Center for Child Studies  
Catholic Community Service, Inc.  
Center for Children's Advocacy  
Child Abuse Council  
Child and Family Resources  
Child and Family Services of Northwestern Michigan  
Children Now  
Children's Action Alliance  
Children's Aid  
Children's Alliance  
Children's Defense Fund - California  
Children's Defense Fund - Minnesota  
Children's Defense Fund-New York  
Children's Defense Fund-Ohio  
Children's Defense Fund - SRO  
Children's Defense Fund - Texas  
Children's Home & Aid  
Children's Home Society of Florida  
Children's Home Society of NC  
Children's Home Society of Washington  
Children's Institute  
Children's Law Center of California  
Children's Network of Southwest Florida

Christ Child House  
Citizens' Committee for Children of NY  
Coalition for Family & Children's Services in Iowa  
Communities Connected for Kids  
Companion Champions  
Concerned Parent  
Cornerstones of Care  
Court Appointed Special Advocates of NYC  
Directions for Living  
Disability Law Center  
Equality California  
Equality North Carolina  
Every Texan  
Fair Wisconsin  
Faith Action Network - Washington State  
Families First Indiana, Inc.  
Families Forward Virginia/Prevent Child Abuse Virginia  
Family & Children Services  
Family Alternatives  
Family Ark, Inc.  
Family Enrichment Network  
Family Resource Center Association  
Family Resources  
Family Service and Children's Aid  
Federation of Youth Services  
Florida Coalition for Children (FCC)  
Florida's Children First  
Foster Care Counts  
Foster Club  
Foster Kinship  
FosterAdopt Connect  
Fostering Forward Michigan, Inc.  
Fostering Futures  
Fostering Great Ideas  
Fostering Success Michigan  
Future Effect  
Generations Together, Inc.  
Gibault Childrens Services  
GreyNickel Inc  
Groundwork Ohio  
Guiding Harbor  
HALOS-Helping and Lending Outreach Support  
Hands Across The Water  
Hathaway Sycamores  
Hope Hill Youth Services  
Illinois CASA  
Illinois Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics

Illinois Collaboration on Youth  
Illinois-Iowa Center for Independent Living  
Impact Living Services  
JCCA  
John Burton Advocates for Youth  
Kansas Children's Service League  
Kids Forward  
Kids Win Missouri  
KidSafe Foundation  
Kinship Care Resource Center @ MSU  
Kinship Care Resource Center at Michigan State University  
Lawyers For Children  
Legal Counsel for Youth and Children  
Livingston County Catholic Charities  
Lutheran Services Florida  
Lutheran Services in Iowa  
Marion County Commission on Youth, Inc. (MCCOY)  
Michigan Federation for Children and Families  
Michigan Kinship Care Coalition  
Michigan Kinship Coalition Committee  
Michigan's Children  
Mississippi Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics  
Mississippi Family Caregiver Coalition  
MSU Kinship Care Resource Center  
NASW-MD  
National Association of Social Workers - Texas Chapter  
NC Child  
NC Pediatric Society  
Nebraska Appleseed  
Nebraska Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics  
New Beginnings Inc.  
New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies, Inc.  
NYS Kinship Navigator- Catholic Family Center  
Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency  
Office of Civil Legal Aid  
Ohio Children's Alliance  
OHIO Youth Advisory Board  
Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy  
Our Children Oregon  
Partners for Our Children, School of Social Work, University of Washington Seattle  
Pendleton Place  
Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children  
Prevent Child Abuse Kentucky  
Prevent Child Abuse NY  
Prevent Child Abuse Vermont  
Public Justice Center  
Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

RurAL CAP  
Ruth Ellis Center, Inc.  
Saint Francis Ministries - Arkansas  
Saint Francis Ministries - Kansas  
Saint Francis Ministries - Nebraska  
Saint Francis Ministries - North Carolina  
Saint Francis Ministries - Texas  
Safe & Sound  
SC Appleseed Legal Justice Center  
Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy  
Silver State Equality-Nevada  
Sisters of Charity Foundation of SC  
South Asian Fund For Education, Scholarship and Training (SAFEST)  
SSS:Self Sustaining Schools  
St Louis Center  
TEAM for West Virginia Children  
Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services  
Texas Care for Children  
Texas CASA  
Texas Foster Care Association  
Texas Lawyers for Children  
TexProtects - Champions for Safe Children  
The Children's Agenda  
The Crittenton Center - Sioux City  
The Delightful Cook Foundation  
The Ohio Council of Churches  
The R.J. Leonard Foundation  
The SAFE Alliance  
Therapeutic Services Agency, Inc.  
Upbring  
VOICES  
Voices for Children in Nebraska  
Voices for Vermont's Children  
West Michigan Partnership for Children  
West Virginia Foundation for Rape Information and Services  
Westchester Children's Association  
Wisconsin Association of Family & Children's Agencies  
Yampa Valley Law & Advocacy Center  
Youth Emergency Services & Shelter of Iowa  
Youth Homes of Mid-America  
YWCA Alaska  
Zero to Five Montana