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
Tex Protects - 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