



**KIDS ARE WAITING**  
Fix Foster Care Now

June 23, 2008

The Honorable Jim McDermott  
Chairman  
House Ways and Means Subcommittee  
on Income Security and Family Support  
U.S. Congress  
Rayburn House Office Building, B-317  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jerry Weller  
Ranking Member  
House Ways and Means Subcommittee  
on Income Security and Family Support  
United State Congress  
Rayburn House Office Building, B-317  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman and Ranking Member:

The Kids Are Waiting campaign is grateful for your leadership in introducing the bipartisan Fostering Connections to Success Act (H. R. 6307.) We strongly endorse and offer our full support for this measure.

In 2005, the nonpartisan Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care studied our nation's foster care system and made practical recommendations on how to improve it. We are pleased that the Fostering Connections to Success Act will make many of those common-sense recommendations a reality and will substantially improve the lives of children and families across our country.

All children need the nurturing and support of a safe, permanent family. Yet there are currently 127,000 foster children waiting to find adoptive families. The Fostering Connections to Success Act will extend and improve the Adoption Incentives Program that has helped increase the number of adoptions of children in foster care from 31,000 in 1997 to 51,000 in 2006. Importantly, the program provides incentives for adoption of children with special needs and older children, who often wait longest to join adoptive families.

Adoption is not the only path to permanency for children who cannot be safely reunited with their parents. The Fostering Connections to Success Act also gives states the option to continue federal assistance for relatives who become legal guardians of children they have been caring for as foster parents. Living with relatives means children have more stability and are more likely to remain connected to their brothers and sisters, extended family, culture and community. With this assistance, nearly 15,000 children could leave foster care today to join permanent families.

In 2006, 26,000 children "aged out" of foster care at about age 18, completely on their own. The Fostering Connections to Success Act would help youth in school, work, or related activity receive the assistance they need to get a good start on life by extending federal foster care payments for eligible children up to the age of 21.



**KIDS ARE WAITING**  
Fix Foster Care Now

More than half of children in foster care have sisters and brothers, but most are separated when they enter foster care. Kids Are Waiting is pleased to see that the Fostering Connections to Success Act requires reasonable efforts to place siblings together when they enter foster care.

Nationwide, Native American children make up a greater proportion of the children in foster care than that of children in the general population. However, many Native American children must currently leave their homes, families and reservations in order to receive the supports and services they need. The Fostering Connections to Success Act provides direct federal foster care and adoption funding to tribal governments, so that tribes can give the children in their care the safe, permanent homes they need, while preserving vital connections to their culture and community.

The Pew Commission recommended child welfare workforce improvements. This measure expands child welfare training by expanding coverage of federal funds for the training of child welfare workers to include private agencies. It also improves oversight of health care and promotes educational stability for children in foster care.

This child welfare reform proposal is an important first step in federal reforms that are needed to help the half a million foster children find the safe, permanent families that all children deserve. Kids Are Waiting applauds the leadership exemplified in introducing this important bill and looks forward to its prompt enactment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Hope A Cooper".

Hope Cooper  
Director  
Kids Are Waiting Campaign

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marci McCoy-Roth".

Marci McCoy-Roth  
Co-director  
Kids Are Waiting Campaign