



June 19, 2008

The Honorable Jim McDermott  
1035 Longworth HOB  
House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Jerry Weller  
108 Cannon Building  
US House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

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Dear Congressmen McDermott and Weller,

On behalf of the **Public Children Services Association of Ohio**, we offer **strong support of your new bill, *The Fostering Connections to Success Act***. Representing the public child protection agencies in Ohio, we strive for safe children, stable families and supportive communities. Key provisions in this bill move us toward meaningful reform that will make a real difference for Ohio's children and families; indeed the nation's children and families.

**Kinship Caregiver Supports** – establishing a **Title IV-E Guardianship Subsidy** for permanent relative caregivers – we know from research children lucky enough to be raised by kin vs. an unrelated foster parent, experience much greater stability, and have improved academic and community outcomes. The **Family Connection Grants and Relative Notification** requirements will also support improved family engagement and connections.

**Improved Supports for Foster Youth up to Age 21** – allowing Title IV-E Foster Care Maintenance support for young persons that do not have the safety net of a permanent family, is critical. Unstable living arrangements for these youth often results in insurmountable barriers to education, work and growth toward self sufficiency. The extension of support for youth adopted or placed in guardianship at an older age will avoid any disincentives toward permanency.

**Tribal Access to Federal Funds & Equity for DC children** – Good practice and federal policy dictates we ensure Native American children are well served culturally; allowing their tribes access to federal Title IV-E funds will finally coordinate federal law and policy. Adjusting the Washington DC Title IV-E foster care reimbursement to equal the city's Medicaid rate, will better support safety and stability for DC's children.

**Expanding Training Funds to the Private Non-profit Workforce and Relative Caregivers** – whether a caseworker is from a public or private agency, or a caregiver is an unrelated or relative foster caregiver, it is critical we empower them with key skills, knowledge and competencies.

**Adoption Incentives Program Reauthorization** – this program has catalyzed the field to double the number of finalized adoptions for waiting children. An updated baseline and improved performance incentives will allow re-investment of funds for continued activities toward finding permanent loving families for all waiting children. *Thank you for acting before this program expires September 30, 2008.*

**Provisions to Focus Practice on Key Outcomes** – stronger requirements to **keep siblings together**, better manage foster children's **health and medical needs**, promotion of **educational stability** for better outcomes, and ensuring adoptive families learn about the **federal adoption tax credit**, will guide improved practice.

Thank you for your leadership in introducing this legislation. We urge prompt passage – *do not let the Adoption Incentives Program expire.*

Sincerely,

  
Crystal Ward Allen, Executive Director  
Public Children Services Association of Ohio

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