



June 23, 2008

The Honorable Jim McDermott  
1035 Longworth  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D. C., 20515

The Honorable Jerry Weller  
108 Cannon  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C., 20515

Dear Representatives McDermott and Weller:

Voices for America's Children (*Voices*), representing child advocates across the country, strongly supports H.R. 6307, the *Fostering Connections to Success Act*, legislation that, if enacted, will be a major step toward improving the lives of foster children across the country. With potential House action occurring this week, the introduction and movement of H.R. 6307 could not occur at a more important time.

*Voices* is a national, nonpartisan child advocacy network that speaks out for effective public policies that will improve the lives of all children in their communities, states, and across the country. The *Voices* network is comprised of 60 state and local child advocacy organizations in 46 states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

*Voices'* vision for child safety calls for all children to be safe in their homes and communities from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence, avoid risky behaviors, and contribute to the community well-being. This vision requires a comprehensive approach, one that is equally focused on prevention and early intervention activities for children and families; high quality intervention based services when children are at risk; and a full community based aftercare approach when children reenter their community. *Voices* believes that your legislation is a strong step forward in assisting states to achieve this goal.

With over 510,000 children in foster care on any given day, the *Fostering Connections to Success Act* seeks to address many of the opportunities within child welfare that have been proven to have positive results for children and families. *Voices* also strongly believes that the components within H.R. 6307 will assist in addressing the disproportionate representation of children of color within child welfare.

The *Fostering Connections to Success Act* begins to address the shortcomings of the current federal child welfare financing structure by allowing states the option of expanding their coverage under Title IV-E Foster Care for populations not currently available. H.R. 6307 would allow federal supports to assist kin and other legal guardians caring for children; a continuation of federal supports for former youth up to age 21 while they are attending school

or beginning their work career; allows private agencies to gain access to Title IV-E training supports that are currently limited to public agencies; allows Tribal nations—for the first time—to gain direct access to Title IV-E Foster Care and Adoption Funds; requires oversight plans to ensure the health and educational services for foster children; and requires reasonable efforts to keep siblings together when they must enter out-of-home care. All of these provisions are essential steps to strengthening child welfare services.

Additionally, H.R. 6307 seeks greater permanency options for children by reauthorizing and expanding the Adoption Incentives Program allowing states to continue the progress already made. By doubling the adoption incentive payments for both special needs and older children will further provide greater supports to states to increase permanency options for foster children.

*Voices* strongly applauds your leadership on the needs of foster children, and requests that this momentum continues to establish stronger prevention and family based early intervention strategies that lead to stronger communities and safer children. The *Voices* network looks forward to working with you to enacting this important legislation.

With regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'William H. Bentley', written in a cursive style.

William H. Bentley  
President and Chief Executive Officer

Cc: The Honorable Nancy Pelosi; The Honorable Steny Hoyer; The Honorable John Boehner;  
The Honorable Charles Rangel; The Honorable Jim McCrery