

December 17, 2008

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
U. S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John A. Boehner  
Minority Leader  
U. S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Reid, Senator McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader Boehner:

As representatives of organizations committed to improving the health and well-being of America's children and families, we are writing to urge your support for the inclusion of a temporary increase to the Federal Financial Participation (FFP) for Title IV-E (Federal Payments for Foster Care and Adoption Assistance) of the Social Security Act as part of a second economic stimulus package. In addition, we urge your support for increases to the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) and community-based child abuse prevention programs funded through the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) to be included in the same stimulus legislation.

We expect that a second economic stimulus package will include an increase in the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) for Medicaid. This increase would automatically trigger an increase in the FFP for Title IV-E unless Congress specifically de-links the two. In drafting the stimulus bill, we urge you not to de-link abused and neglected children. During an economic recession, children are more vulnerable to abuse and neglect. Yet at the same time, states face declining resources to care for these children in need. We believe that a temporary increase to the FFP to Title IV-E of the Social Security Act would provide significant fiscal relief to states, in concert with an FMAP increase to Medicaid. Congress should include the automatic increase in the FFP for states in any economic stimulus package it considers. This assistance is vital in helping states meet the needs of children and families during a recession.

As you know, Title IV-E is a federal program administered by state and local public child welfare agencies that provides assistance to vulnerable children and youth. Specifically, Title IV-E provides foster care maintenance payments to states on behalf of each child who has been removed from the home, as well as adoption assistance and reimbursement for administrative and training expenses. At present, states are struggling to balance budgets and programs for vulnerable children and families are facing cuts.

According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 43 states faced or are facing budget shortfalls for this year and/or next year, and to date, at least 25 states have enacted budget cuts to critical services, including public health programs, programs for the elderly and disabled, k-12 education, colleges and universities, state workforce, and child welfare services. To date, states including Connecticut, Illinois, Ohio and Maryland have ordered budget cuts to child welfare programs. It is critical that as we navigate the current economic downturn, we ensure better care for our most vulnerable children by continuing to invest in our child welfare system.

Congress should also help the most distressed states provide additional prevention and early intervention services, as well as child protection services, by increasing SSBG and funds that go to community-based child abuse prevention programs through CAPTA as part of an economic recovery strategy and state fiscal relief. Specifically, states that are struggling with significant job loss and unemployment should receive additional SSBG funds to provide such services. In addition, community-based organizations receiving CAPTA funds

play a critical role in delivering prevention services, but their budgets—often based on charitable donations—are likely to suffer in difficult economic times.

As the economy weakens and state and local revenues dwindle, the need for public programs increases. The federal government can help by providing states with assistance in the form of additional emergency funding for child welfare services as part of an economic recovery strategy. Doing so will help states maintain essential child welfare programs and services, as well as ensure that states are not forced to make additional cuts to desperately needed services. While a FFP adjustment for Title IV-E and increases to SSBG and CAPTA would amount to a small investment, these funds would be of enormous help in caring for abused and neglected children.

As organizations that seek to improve the lives of vulnerable children and families, we are grateful for your leadership and we look forward to working with you to include additional funding for Title IV-E, SSBG and CAPTA in an economic stimulus package this year.

Sincerely,

First Focus	DC
Action for Children North Carolina	NC
All Saints Church Foster Care Project	CA
Alliance for Children and Families	DC
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry	DC
American Academy of Pediatrics	DC
American Humane Association	VA
American Psychiatric Association	VA
American Psychological Association	DC
Association for Children of New Jersey	NJ
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law	DC
California Council of Churches IMPACT	CA
California State Association of Counties	CA
California Youth Connection	CA
Catholic Charities USA	VA
Center for Public Policy Priorities	TX
Child Abuse Council	IL
Child and Family Policy Center	IA
Child Welfare League of America	VA
Children First for Oregon	OR
Children Now	CA
Children's Action Alliance	AZ
Children's Alliance	WA

Children's Defense Fund	DC
Children's Defense Fund - Texas	TX
Children's Home + Aid	IL
Children's Law Center	DC
Children's Law Center of Los Angeles	CA
Children's Service Society of Utah	UT
City of New York Administration for Children's Services	NY
Clinical Social Work Association	VA
Colorado Children's Campaign	CO
Colorado Coalition of Adoptive Families (COCAF)	CO
Colorado Council of Churches	CO
Colorado Progressive Coalition	CO
Community Action Partnership	DC
County Commissioners' Association of Ohio	OH
County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania	PA
County Welfare Directors Association of California	CA
DePelchin Children's Center	TX
Durham County (NC) Department of Social Services	NC
Family Promise - Salt Lake	UT
Family Voices	DC
Family Voices of New Jersey	NJ
First Star	DC
Foster Care Alumni of America	VA
Foster Family-based Treatment Association	NJ
Generations United	DC
Gilpin County Department of Human Services	CO
GrandFamilies of America	MD
Hawai'i Primary Care Association	HI
Healthy Teen Network	MD
Independent Living Resources, Inc.	NC
Jackson County Human Services	MN
John Burton Foundation	CA
Kansas Action for Children	KS
Kentucky Youth Advocates	KY
Kidsave	DC
Lincoln County Department of Social Services	NC

Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services	CA
Maine Children's Alliance	ME
McDowell County Department of Social Services	NC
Michigan's Children	MI
Monterey County Department of Social and Employment Services	CA
National Association of Counties	DC
National Association of County Human Services Administrators	DC
National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators (NAPCWA)	DC
National Association of Social Workers	DC
National Center for Housing and Child Welfare	MD
National Collaboration for Youth	DC
National Foster Care Coalition	DC
National Independent Living Association (NILA)	FL
National Indian Child Welfare Association	OR
National Network to End Domestic Violence	DC
New Mexico Voices for Children	NM
National Respite Coalition	VA
North American Council on Adoptable Children	MN
North Carolina Association of County Directors of Social Services (NCACDSS)	NC
Ohio Association of Child Caring Agencies	OH
Ohio Job and Family Services Directors' Association	OH
Oklahoma Therapeutic Foster Care Association	OK
Pasadena Youth Center	CA
Pennsylvania Association of County Human Services Administrators	PA
Pennsylvania Commission for Children and Families	PA
Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children	PA
Prevent Child Abuse America	IL
Public Children Services Association of Ohio	OH
San Francisco Human Services Agency	CA
Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law	IL
Service Employees International Union	DC
Solutions For Children And Caregivers of Maryland	MD
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network	NJ
Stop It Now!	MA
Strong Able Youth Speaking Out, Inc.	NC
Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth	TN

Tennessee Justice Center	TN
Texans Care For Children	TX
TexProtects, The Texas Association for the Protection of Children	TX
The Black Children's Institute of Tennessee (BCI)	TN
The Children's Aid Society	NY
The Children's Partnership	CA
United Neighborhood Centers of America	DC
United Way of Anderson County	SC
Virginia Poverty Law Center	VA
Voice for Adoption	DC
Voices for America's Children	DC
Voices for Illinois Children	IL
Voices for Ohio's Children	OH
Voices for Virginia's Children	VA
Wisconsin Council on Children and Families	WI
Youth Homes Inc.	NC