



June 14, 2016

The Honorable Kevin Brady  
Chairman, Committee on Ways and Means  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Sander Levin  
Ranking Member, Committee on Ways and Means  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Orrin Hatch  
Chairman, Committee on Finance  
U.S. Senate  
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
Ranking Member, Committee on Finance  
U.S. Senate  
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Vern Buchanan  
Chairman, Human Resources Subcommittee  
Committee on Ways and Means  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Lloyd Doggett  
Ranking Member, Human Resources Subcommittee  
Committee on Ways and Means  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen Brady and Hatch, Ranking Members Levin and Wyden, Chairman Buchanan and Ranking Member Doggett:

On behalf of the First Focus Campaign for Children (FFCC), a bipartisan organization committed to making children and their families a priority in federal policy and budget decisions, I am writing in strong support of H.R. 5456, the Family First Prevention Services Act of 2016. This bill makes important policy changes in federal child welfare spending that better support the needs of vulnerable children and families.

Currently, there are 415,000 children in the foster care system, a number that has increased by 3.5 percent from 2014. Nearly 31 percent of children placed in foster care were removed due to parental alcohol or drug use, and in some states, the percentage of removal due to parental substance abuse is closer to 60 percent. In addition, 57,000 children in foster care live in group homes or congregate care settings. More than 40 percent of these children have no clinical need to be in such a setting, and should be with families who can provide love and support.

The Family First Prevention Services Act of 2016 contains many important provisions that address these poor statistics and will make a significant impact in strengthening and keeping families together. For the first time states will be able to use federal dollars from Title IV-E of the Social Security Act to provide time-limited, evidence-based services to families. The services are aimed to help prevent children from entering the foster care system by allowing federal reimbursement to families for mental health services, substance abuse treatment, and in-home parent skill-based programs. In addition, the bill incentivizes states to ensure that children are placed in family-based settings by only allowing federal reimbursement after an assessment has occurred and it has been determined that the child should be placed in a quality residential treatment program.

The legislation also includes a number of other provisions aimed to reform and strengthen the child welfare system including the extension of the Title IV-B program, improving supports for youth transitioning to adulthood, establishing model foster care licensing standards, and calling for a GAO review to examine compliance of states in reinvesting savings from the federal adoption assistance reimbursement for special needs kids.

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We look forward to working with you to ensure these new child welfare finance reforms will truly benefit children who come to the attention of the child welfare system and to continue to explore additional improvements on their behalf to ensure they all have safe, permanent families. Thank you for your continued leadership on behalf of these children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bruce Lesley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent underline under the letter "L" in "Lesley".

Bruce Lesley  
President