

Talking Points (October 2015)

As the Keeping Kids in Families campaign continues to grow and expand its policy influence, we are seeing a number legislative proposals that align with our work. We recognize that we have a crucial opportunity to ensure that our message is heard across congressional districts and states by calling members' attention to our campaign and recent legislative development related to welfare finance reform.

Below are speaking points related to specific legislative proposals that are in some way aligned with our principles (prevention, early intervention, expanded service populations, accountability, building community capacities and greater state flexibility) for child welfare finance reform. As we push for comprehensive reform, it is important that we advocate for the inclusion of these principles to ensure that they are supported and carried forward as future legislation is developed.

Please reference these points, as you meet and speak with your members of Congress and discuss the campaign and important legislative developments.

- As an advocate for children and families, I am working to help strengthen our nation's child welfare financing model to ensure better outcomes for children and families.
- **For far too long our nation has been operating under an outdated system for federal financing child welfare.** The current financing model - which favors one intervention only: foster care - does not allow us to meet the best needs of our children. In most states preventative services continue to receive only a fraction of available funding, and as a result, we continue to fail too many families.
- I have joined Keeping Kids in Families, and through this campaign I am actively showing my support of policy proposals that ensure that every child has a safe and secure, caring permanent family by:
 - Providing for a wider array of supports, services and early interventions for children and families that prevent the need for foster care.
 - Expanding the service population so that we are able to meet the needs for more children and families.
 - Ensuring accountability to better outcomes for children.
 - Allowing for reinvestment of savings in building community capacities that further improve and strengthen the child welfare system.
 - Providing the flexibility states need to maximize the use of funds that are being invested in our child welfare systems without the use of waivers.
- **The major push for Keeping Kids in Families is comprehensive child welfare finance reform.** We recognize that it will take time to achieve our goals but we will continue to push for comprehensive system reform that aligns with our principles and provides a regulatory and fiscal framework that ultimately creates lasting change and a better future for children and families.

- As my elected representative, I am asking your support in helping to advance legislative proposals that bring us closer to achieving the goal of comprehensive reform. These proposals call for upfront investments and principles that ultimately help to strengthen families facing crisis and improve well-being and life outcomes for all children.
- Some of these proposals include (see specific legislation below).

Family Stability and Kinship Care Act - Sen. Wyden (D-OR) [and Rep. Doggett (D-TX)]

- The Family Stability and Kinship Care Act of 2015 calls for greater investments in prevention and early interventions programs that keep children safe and in permanent families, whenever possible.
- This legislation would allow the use of Title IV-E funds for time-limited family services and provide 25 percent of expenditures for evidence based programs.
- Under this legislation, Title IV-B would increase to \$1 billion mandatory funding.

The Family-Based Foster Care Services Act - Sen. Portman (R-OH) and Sen. Baldwin (D-WI) and Rep. DeLauro (D-CT) and Rep. Cole (R-OK)

- The Family-Based Foster Care Services Act calls for assistance coverage for therapeutic foster care services.
- This legislation would require qualified therapeutic foster care programs be state-licensed and provide age-appropriate, gender responsive, trauma informed services for children under 21.
- It would also provide parents (bio and kin) and caregivers with specialized training on children with mental/behavioral health illness, trauma, behavioral health, medically fragile or dev. disabled and their specific needs.

All Kids Matter Act - Sen. Bennet (D-CO) and Sen. Crapo (R-ID)

- The All Kids Matter Act places an emphasis on prevention, intervention and support services, before, during, and after placement.
- The Act calls for a service array developed by the Department of Health and Human Services and states.
- It would allow for the continuation of waivers and improve barriers to permanency.

Foster Youth Independence Act - Sen. Grassley (R-IA) and Sen. Reed (D-RI)

- The Foster Youth Independence Act expands the Chaffee Independence Living Program for youth that have aged out, up to age 23 if a state has extended foster care up to age 21 (per the Fostering Connections Act) or the state agency has used state or other funds (non-Chaffee funds) to assist and serve youth that have aged out, up to age 21 (in states that do not provide extended coverage, but provide a level of services to youth if the state had extended foster care).