

March XX, 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20002

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20002

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
1233 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
233 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Ryan, and Minority Leader Pelosi:

On behalf of over XXX national, state, and local undersigned organizations, we are writing to thank Congress for enacting the *Family First Prevention Services Act* as part of the *Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018*. This landmark bipartisan legislation will strengthen families so more children can remain safely with their parents and kinship caregivers and avoid unnecessary placements in foster care. Children fare best in families, and this newly enacted law represents an historic step toward better aligning federal child welfare policy with this goal. We represent advocates for children, youth, and families, medical and public health professionals, public and private providers, foster parents, adoptive parents, kinship caregivers, and alumni of foster care, and it is our strong belief that these reforms will improve the lives of the most vulnerable children and families.

In particular, we applaud the provisions of *Family First* that will provide federal investments in evidence-based prevention and early intervention. These policies will allow states to access federal funding under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act for mental health services, substance use disorder treatment, and in-home parenting skills services. Under the law, states will also be able to receive IV-E reimbursement for children who are placed with a parent in a licensed residential family-based treatment facility for substance abuse, regardless of income eligibility. These and other provisions in the law will help states working to address the detrimental impact of the opioid epidemic on children and families.

Family First will also help to ensure family-based care for children who need foster care. The law builds on previous requirements that children be placed in the least restrictive, most family-like setting appropriate for their special needs. Once implemented, the law will target federal dollars toward certain categories of placements: family foster homes; qualified residential treatment programs for children and youth with special treatment needs; and settings for children and youth with special circumstances such as pregnant and parenting teens, older youth in supervised independent living settings, or programs serving children who have been or are at-risk

of becoming victims of sex trafficking. These provisions will improve funding incentives to match the best evidence of what children need, by supporting placements in family settings so that children can heal and ultimately thrive.

Thank you again for your leadership in enacting this important and comprehensive child welfare reform legislation. We are also especially appreciative of the bipartisan leadership of Ways and Means Committee Chairman Brady and Ranking Member Levin in the House and Finance Committee Chairman Hatch and Ranking Member Wyden in the Senate. This law will truly benefit vulnerable children and families who come to the attention of child welfare systems and represents a huge step forward for the field.

Sincerely,

National Organizations:

State Organizations: