**DATE**

The Honorable Patty Murray The Honorable Richard Burr

Chairperson Ranking Member

Senate Committee on Health, Education, Senate Committee on Health, Education,

Labor & Pensions Labor & Pensions

Washington, DC 20510 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Robert C. Scott The Honorable Virginia Foxx

Chairperson Ranking Member

House Education & Labor Committee House Education & Labor Committee

Washington, DC 20515 Washington, DC 20515

Dear Honorable Members,

On behalf of **ORGANIZATION**, I am writing in support of the proposed amendments to the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (“CAPTA”) in S.1927 to establish a national right to counsel for children and parents involved in the child welfare system.

**ORGANIZATION/INDIVIDUAL BACKGROUND & CONNECTION TO CHILD WELFARE**

Youth experiencing foster care need and deserve a true voice in a system that makes significant decisions about their lives. The child welfare court process is complex and overwhelming for all parties involved – and especially for youth. With such fundamental issues at stake, it is critical that every child and youth has a trained attorney in the courtroom who is there solely to represent their interests.

**ADD EXAMPLE FROM PERSONAL OR WORK EXPERIENCE ILLUSTRATING THE IMPORTANCE OF CHILDREN HAVING ATTORNEYS ADVOCATING FOR THEM**

Establishing a right to counsel will clarify the original intent of CAPTA by recognizing that children are parties and stand on equal footing with other parties. In addition, the amendments are supported by research, which shows that legal representation has a positive impact on outcomes for children and their families – including more successful family reunifications, less time spent in foster care, and a shorter time to adoption or guardianship when reunification is not possible.

For these reasons, **ORGANIZATION** strongly supports the right to counsel provisions being proposed in CAPTA. Notably, we support the amendments suggested by the American Bar Association (ABA), as well as amendments that would ensure that youth in extended foster care retain their attorney for the entire duration of their case.

Thank you again for your leadership and for standing up for children and youth.

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Sincerely,

**NAME & SIGNATURE**