

October 28, 2015

The Honorable Luis V. Gutierrez
2408 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Karen Bass
408 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Judy Chu
1034 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Gutiérrez, Congresswoman Bass and Congresswoman Chu:

We, the undersigned, representing 121 organizations committed to improving the lives of children in the United States, thank you for your leadership in sponsoring the Children's Bill of Rights House Resolution. The Children's Bill of Rights is an important step forward in federal recognition that children are entitled to basic rights and protections that promote their physical, social, and emotional well-being. In addition, it promotes access to education and other opportunities that enhance their life skills to ensure the healthy development of all children in the United States.

Currently, there is no comprehensive federal framework that guarantees the rights of children in the United States. Laws are applied unevenly across states and local jurisdictions, meaning children are often sidelined in budget and policy priorities because they don't have a voice in the system. Despite representing over 22% of the U.S. population, children's programs only account for less than 8% of federal spending. In 2014, 1,640 children died due to abuse and neglect; 19.9% of children lived in poverty; and 8.58 million children lived in households that were food insecure in the United States. More must be done to ensure that the basic rights of children are met so they can thrive and have the tools for success.

This Children's Bill of Rights covers a number of important provisions that create a benchmark for what children are entitled to and promotes the best interest of the child standard across issue areas. The provisions include:

- Ensuring that children's basic needs (shelter, clothing, food) are met;
- Protection from abuse and/or neglect, access to medical treatment;
- Educational supports and opportunities;
- Representation by attorneys and child advocates in legal proceedings;
- Prioritizing and developing healthy attachments with parents or other caregivers;
- Rehabilitative services if detained or incarcerated and protections from unsafe labor practices.

These rights are critical for children and should be recognized as such across the United States.

We thank you for your leadership in introducing the Children's Bill of Rights Resolution and look forward to working with you as you work to pass this important legislation. Should you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Rricha Mathur at (202) 999-4852 or at r-richam@firstfocus.org.

Sincerely,

211 LA County (California)
Adolescent and Family Growth Center, Inc. (Virginia)
Adoption Rhode Island
Advocates for Children and Youth (Maryland)
All Faiths (New Mexico)
All Our Kin, Inc. (Connecticut)
American Federation of Teachers
Arizona's Children Association
Asian Pacific Policy & Planning Council (California)
Association of CA School Administrators (California)
Auburn YMCA WEIU (New York)
Birth Defects Research & Education Foundation
Blueprint for Change (Hawaii)
California Association of Food Banks
Centerforce (California)
Center for Children (California)
Center for Effective Government
Child Labor Coalition
Child and Family Policy Center (Iowa)
Child and Family Resources, Inc. (Arizona)
Child Welfare League of America
Children & Family Futures
Children Inc. (Kentucky)
Children's Advocacy Institute
Children's Health Fund
Children's Hospital Los Angeles (California)
Church Council of Friends Congregational Church, United Church of Christ
Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights (COLOR)
Community Child Care (Virginia)
Connecticut Voices for Children
Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption
Dependency Legal Group of San Diego
Eagle's Wings Food Pantry (North Carolina)
Early Edge California
Easter Seals
Easter Seals Blake Foundation (Arizona)
Family and Children's Place (Kentucky)
Family Care Network, Inc. (California)
Family Services of Western Pennsylvania
Family Voices NJ (New Jersey)
First Focus Campaign for Children
First Star
Florida's Children First
Florida Immigrant Coalition
Forum for Youth Investment
Foster Care Alumni of America, Washington Chapter
Foster Family-based Treatment Association
Georgia Rural Urban Summit
God's Will in Action (Kansas)

Growing Home Southeast, Inc. (South Carolina)
Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc.
Hawaii Alliance for Community Based Economic Development
Healthy Family Partnership (Pennsylvania)
Healthy Teen Network (Maryland)
HighScope Educational Research Foundation
High Flight Arts and Letters
Hillsides (California)
Human Resource Training (Arizona)
InnerCity Struggle (California)
Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children
Iowa Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
Iowa Mental Health Planning Council
Juvenile Justice Coalition (Ohio)
Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)
Ku Aloha Ola Mau (Hawaii)
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services
Maine Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
Metropolitan Community Churches
Michigan Disability Rights Coalition
Michigan League for Public Policy
Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association, Kansas
Midwest Foster Care and Adoption Association, Missouri
NAMI Greater Des Moines (Iowa)
NAMI Iowa Children's Mental Health Committee
National African American Drug Policy Coalition, Inc.
National Association of Counsel for Children
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Center on Adoption and Permanency
National Consumers League
National Foster Parent Association
National PTA
National WIC Association
Network for Environmental & Economic Responsibility of United Church of Christ
New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies, Inc.
New Jersey Citizen Action
New Jersey Tenants Organization
NYS American Academy of Pediatrics (New York)
One Simple Wish
Ounce of Prevention Fund
Parents as Teachers (Missouri)
Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children
PeterCares House (Maryland)
Posada (Colorado)
Provincial Council of the Clerics of St. Viator (Viatorians)
Public Advocacy for Kids
Public Counsel
Ralph L. Carr Colorado Judicial Center
Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services (RAICES)
Rights4Girls

SOS Children's Villages- USA, Inc.
Social Action Linking Together (SALT) (Virginia)
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (New Jersey)
TFP Therapeutic Services
Texans Care for Children
The Center for Children & Youth Justice (Washington)
The Consortium (Colorado)
The Crime Victims' Center of Chester County, Inc. (Pennsylvania)
The Global Justice Institute
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
The National Crittenton Foundation
The Ray E. Helfer Society
The Shriver National Center on Poverty Law
United Way of Buffalo & Erie County (New York)
United Way of Garland County (Arkansas)
United Way of Northwest Louisiana
United Way of San Luis Obispo County (California)
United Way of the Florida Keys
U.S. Environmental Watch
VOICES for Alabama's Children
Voices for Children in Nebraska
Voices for Vermont's Children
Worksite Wellness LA (California)
YDI Elev8 New Mexico