

Voice for Adoption

SPEAKING OUT FOR OUR NATION'S WAITING CHILDREN

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March 10th, 2010

The Honorable Pete Stark
United States House of Representatives
239 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Stark:

I am writing to express Voice for Adoption's appreciation for your sponsorship of the Every Child Deserves a Family Act (H.R. 4806). Voice for Adoption is a coalition of organizations that collectively speak on behalf of children who are waiting to be adopted from foster care and on behalf of those families that adopt waiting children. At this time there are nearly half a million children in the United States foster care system, of these, 123,000 children are waiting to be adopted. Children without families are among our most vulnerable population, often facing poor outcomes. Each year 26,000 youth "age out" of our nation's foster care system. As these young people age without families they are more likely to get pregnant and have children at a young age, they are more likely to be homeless, incarcerated and suffer from mental illness or substance abuse and less likely to complete higher education, compared to their peers.

There is a shortage of available families for children in foster care; this includes both foster and adoptive homes. Many children, especially minority and older youth are the ones that wait the longest, moving around the system making it impossible for them to gain permanent connections to supportive adults. This legislation provides important recognition of the shortage of caring and loving resource parents available to this population. Prohibiting agencies from delaying or denying placement of children in foster or adoptive homes, based solely on the prospective parents marital status or sexual orientation, recognizes an untapped resource of qualified parents for children.

Each year since 2006, roughly 51,000 children have been adopted from foster care, however we know many more still wait for loving families. The Every Child Deserves a Family Act recognizes that a child should not be denied a willing and qualified parent, simply because of the sexual orientation of a prospective parent. Rather, the best interest of the child should always be the first criteria of placing a child—a child who lingers in foster care, moving from placement to placement without stability and without a family is never in the best interest of any child.

Thank you for all your work on behalf of vulnerable children and families.

Sincerely,

Nicole Dobbins
Executive Director