



March 11, 2008

Matt Weidinger
Staff Director
Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support
U.S. House of Representatives
B-316 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Responses to Inquiries for the Congressional Record

Dear Mr. Weidinger:

On behalf of the American Public Human Services Association and its affiliate, the National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators, I respectfully submit these responses to the questions from Ranking Member Jerry Weller and Representative Dave Camp regarding the testimony given at the hearing on the Invest in KIDS Act on February 27, 2008.

1. It is estimated that approximately 500,000 children are in foster care on any given day. It is also estimated that approximately 150,000, or one-third of those children, are living with relatives. Many relative placements receive TANF child-only grant assistance for foster children placed in their home. These grants are time-limited. The average funds received per child by kinship caregivers is only \$200-\$300 per month.

The short-term and minimal support provided by TANF for relatives is a start, but it is not a substantial and dependable provision. The Invest in KIDS Act would allow states access to long-term and increased funding to support relatives who provide foster care.

2. The "offset" suggested in the Invest in KIDS Act is a new concept for states and they have not had a great deal of time to determine the impact of this proposal. At this time, it is likely that states share many of the same questions as the subcommittee. As states begin to take a closer look at the act, they will be developing impact statements and look forward to sharing them with the subcommittee.
3. In our view, H.R. 5466 does make significant strides toward resolving the current funding limitations. The flexibility provided by this resolution would allow states to support families of children who enter foster care to help them rebuild their lives and welcome children home as quickly as possible.

The current federal framework does not support a comprehensive service system that encompasses prevention, efforts to move children quickly and safely to permanency, and post-permanency services. The funding opportunities proposed

by this resolution for the provision of preventive services, in-home services, and post-permanency services will ensure that more children remain in their homes when it is safe to do so. These services are a critical component in the continuum of supports we need to strengthen families. It makes fiscal sense to fund the up-front part of the child welfare system to prevent more children from entering foster care. Rather than ensuring effectively aligned resources, the current system encourages placements for children outside of their homes and families, while failing to intervene before this level of involvement is imminent.

On average, only 10 percent of federal funding supports prevention. Moreover, a recent analysis by Prevent Child Abuse America estimates that the nation's total annual cost of child abuse—including the responses of the foster care, juvenile justice, law enforcement and health care systems—totals nearly \$104 billion.

Under the existing financial reimbursement structure, Title IV-E eligibility is directly tied to the 1996 Aid to Families with Dependent Children income eligibility requirements, which has not been adjusted for inflation. States have seen a steady decline in the number of children eligible for Title IV-E reimbursement because of the current eligibility formula. Compared to 1998, 35,000 fewer children are now eligible and, since then, states have lost an estimated \$1.9 billion in federal foster care support.

4. APHSA and NAPCWA support the flexible funding proposed in H.R. 5466. We continue to advocate for additional funding for the full continuum of child welfare services, including prevention and post-permanency. APHSA and NAPCWA are members of the Partnership to Protect Children and Strengthen Families, and we continue to fully support the entire proposal. The proposal provides a vision of federal child welfare financing improvements that are needed to enhance outcomes for children and families. The recommendations call for a full partnership between the federal government and states with shared responsibility at multiple points in the system. In summary, the partnership's recommendations for changes to the federal Title IV-E Program, which will require both federal and state investments, would:
 - Promote investments in prevention and treatment services by redirecting for these purposes those funds that states now lose when they safely reduce their foster care caseloads and expenditures, and redirecting the state funds that would no longer be needed for foster care if the federal government provided financial assistance for foster care for all children, as we propose.
 - Guarantee children who are reunited with parents, placed permanently with relatives, or adopted from care, and older youth aging out of foster care, post-permanency services to prevent their return to foster care.
 - Reach greater numbers of children, including those being cared for in foster care by grandparents and other relatives who are their legal guardians and want to care for them permanently, and American Indian children who have been denied access in the past to Title IV-E assistance.
 - Ensure a competent, skilled and professional child welfare workforce by allowing federal Title IV-E training funds to be used for professional development related to safety, permanence and well-being for children and for all staff who work with children in the child welfare system.
 - Increase federal reimbursement for quality casework services, and maintain general overhead and purely administrative expenditures at their current match rate.

- Allow states to reinvest penalties and disallowances into the system for evaluations of promising approaches.
 - Require states to report on how funds for children are being invested, the impact of these improvements on services, foster care placements, workforce improvements, and outcomes for children who are in or at risk of entering the child welfare system, and improve the federal Child and Family Service Reviews.
5. APHSA and NAPCWA agree that H.R. 5466 casts a much-needed and necessary focus on the educational needs of children in foster care. It is important to garner systemic and collaborative resources to support educational success for these children from early childhood through higher education. Requiring that local education agencies and child welfare systems work together to ensure educational stability for children in the child in foster care is an important element of providing the service supports that will improve educational outcomes for this population. The McKinney-Vento Act within NCLB also addresses school stability, and allows LEAs to assume transportation costs for children in foster care to attend their school of origin.

Many states are engaged in ongoing efforts to improve educational outcomes for children and youth in the child welfare system. Successful cross-system collaboration initiatives commonly include work that enables the child welfare system to sustain school placement stability, have access to school records in order to facilitate timely school enrollment, ensure access to special education services, and continue services past age 18 to support successful transitions to higher education and the workforce.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your questions. If you have any additional questions, please contact me at (602) 542-6008 or Anita Light, NAPCWA Director, at (202) 682-0100.

Sincerely,



Kenneth Deibert
Deputy Director
Children, Youth and Families
Arizona Department of Economic Security