

Summary of H.R. 4282, the *International Child Support Recovery Improvement Act of 2012*

Sponsored by Congressman Berg and Ranking Member Doggett

Under the current Federal Child Support Enforcement program, States have the option to recognize child support orders from other countries, and many of them do. Unfortunately, at times other countries do not reciprocate our States' efforts to collect child support from a noncustodial parent living abroad. To address this problem, the United States negotiated and signed the Hague Convention on the International Recovery of Child Support and Other Forms of Family Maintenance in 2007. The Senate then gave its consent in 2010, but the United States cannot implement the treaty without enacting implementing legislation.

H.R. 4282 provides the necessary implementing legislation and includes two additional no-cost improvements to the Federal Child Support Enforcement Program.

Section by Section Summary of the Bill

- **Sec. 1: Title.** This bill is called the “International Child Support Recovery Improvement Act of 2012.”
- **Sec. 2: Amendments to Ensure Access to Child Support Services for International Cases.** Provides the implementing language needed to ratify the Hague Convention, a structured system for information exchange and enforcement of child support cases for participating countries, enabling States to more easily collect on child support orders involving parents abroad. The legislation requires States to enact legislative changes so their State laws are consistent with the treaty, although some have already made such changes. States will have until October 1, 2013 to enact these changes or risk losing Federal administrative funds. Ten States have already enacted these changes, but their provisions will not be in force until all States have and the treaty is ratified. *Effective upon enactment.*
- **Sec. 3: Data Exchange Standardized for Improved Interoperability.** Continues previous bipartisan Human Resources subcommittee efforts and directs the Secretary of Health and Human Services to develop standardized data elements to be used in improving the accuracy and administration of child support benefits and services. *Effective 12 months after enactment.*
- **Sec 4. Efficient Use of the National Directory of New Hires for Federally- Sponsored Research Assessing the Effectiveness of Federal Policies and Programs in Achieving Labor Market Outcomes.** Allows non-governmental researchers access to data in the National Directory of New Hires for use in evaluating whether reemployment programs are working as intended. Researchers argue that currently it is difficult to gain access to wage information, driving them to use unverified self-reported income information, which reduces the reliability of program evaluations. Access to NDNH will also reduce data collection costs so policies can be reviewed more cost-effectively, without sacrificing quality and promoting improved policy design in the future. Anticipating possible privacy concerns associated with providing expanded access to any personally identifiable information contained in the NDNH, the bill requires research firms to uphold strict rules governing the data's confidentiality and provides firm penalties for unauthorized disclosure of this data, similar to the treatment of tax data held by the Internal Revenue Service. *Effective upon enactment.*
- **Sec 5. Budgetary Effects.** Provides the necessary Senate budget language so the bill can be passed without amendment and proceed to the President.

Preliminary Budget Estimate

A preliminary CBO cost estimate indicates the legislation would result in small net savings (~\$500,000 over 10 years) as a result of administrative savings due to some States' taking up the option to require reciprocating or treaty countries to go through their central authorities with child support requests, or to simply reject requests from non-reciprocating or treaty countries.



June 4, 2012

Representative Geoff Davis, Chairman
Representative Lloyd Doggett, Ranking Member
Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Resources
1102 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Davis and Ranking Member Doggett:

The National Child Support Enforcement Association (NCSEA) supports the bipartisan *International Child Support Recovery Improvement Act of 2012* (H.R. 4282) and applauds your efforts to bring the measure to the House floor.

Section 2 of the bill provides the implementing language necessary to ratify the 2007 Hague Convention Treaty on the International Recovery of Child Support and Other Forms of Family Maintenance. NCSEA members worked tirelessly on the Convention. It contains procedures for processing international child support cases that are uniform, simple, efficient, accessible, and cost-free to U.S. citizens seeking support in other countries. It is founded on the agreement of countries that ratify the Convention to recognize and enforce each other's support orders.

International cases can be challenging and very time consuming for child support workers because there are no agreed upon standards of proof, forms or methods of communication. As more parents cross international borders leaving children behind, international child support enforcement is more important than ever.

For many international cases, U.S. courts and state Title IV-D child support enforcement agencies already recognize and enforce child support obligations, whether or not the United States has a reciprocal agreement with the other country. However, many foreign countries will not enforce U.S. support orders in the absence of a treaty obligation. Ratification of the Convention by the United States will mean that more children residing in the United States will receive financial support from their parents residing in countries that are also signatories to the Convention.

NCSEA has long sought congressional action on this issue, so that our nation's children receive the financial support to which they are entitled.

Thank you again for your leadership on this bill.

Sincerely,

Colleen Delaney Eubanks, CAE
Executive Director

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The Honorable Geoff Davis
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The Honorable Lloyd Doggett
Ranking Member
House Committee on Ways and Means
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1106 Longworth HOB
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Davis and Ranking Member Doggett:

I'm writing to express our strong support for your subcommittee's efforts, in HR. 4282, to increase researcher access to the National Directory of New Hires (NDNH).

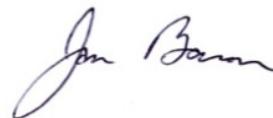
As background, the Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, whose mission is to increase government effectiveness through rigorous evidence about "what works." We have no financial interest in this or any other policy proposals or initiatives.

Our support for your proposal to increase researcher access to NDNH is based on its potential to greatly lower the cost and burden of conducting scientifically-rigorous evaluations of employment programs, by enabling such studies to measure employment and earnings outcomes using existing administrative data rather than engaging in costly new data collection (e.g., individual interviews).

As summarized in a short brief we recently developed – *Rigorous Program Evaluations on a Budget*¹ – in other policy areas where administrative data are more accessible, such as education and criminal justice, large-scale rigorous evaluations have sometimes been conducted for as little as \$50,000-\$100,000, producing valid evidence that is of policy and practical importance. Researcher access to NDNH data could bring this capability to workforce development policy, greatly accelerating the development of credible evidence about what works to improve the employment and earnings of U.S. workers.

We appreciate your leadership on this important issue. Please let us know if we can be of assistance as it goes forward.

Sincerely,



Jon Baron
President

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¹ <http://coalition4evidence.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/Rigorous-Program-Evaluations-on-a-Budget-March-2012.pdf>



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June 4, 2012

The Honorable Congressman Berg
323 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Berg,

I am writing to congratulate you on advancing H.R. 4282, The International Child Support Recovery and Improvement Act of 2012, to the House floor. Thank you again for inviting me to testify before the Human Resources Subcommittee on Ways and Means.

As I stated in my recent testimony, this bill includes an important technical provision that enables researchers to more easily access the National Directory of New Hires (NDNH) database, which contains earnings and employment data collected by states from employers. Removing this barrier in the law will result in more accurate, cost-effective assessments of the employment effects of federal programs.

Independent research firms like MDRC are contracted by the government to evaluate the extent to which federal programs work; in many cases, a key measure of effectiveness is the programs' long-term impact on participants' employment and earnings. The NDNH database, maintained by the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement, houses employment and earnings data reported by the states for child support enforcement purposes. However, research contractors are generally unable to access this essential database. Instead they are forced to get the *very same data* directly from the states, at great cost to the federal government and at considerable burden in duplicative reporting for the states.

In this time of severe budget constraints, Congress must have credible, nonpartisan information to understand whether federally supported programs actually help people find work and increase their earnings. The technical provision in this bill would ensure the availability of data necessary for researchers to examine the effectiveness of these programs.

This provision expands researchers' access to NDNH data and also maintains strong privacy protections. Since personally identifiable information is contained in the NDNH database, the provision requires research firms to continue to uphold strict rules governing the data's confidentiality and provides severe penalties for unauthorized disclosure of this data.

Thank you for recognizing the importance of giving researchers greater access to NDNH data. Attached is my testimony for further reference.

Sincerely,

Gordon L. Berlin
President, MDRC