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Please see the editorial that we submitted to media sources on December 5th. We would like this to be considered for the record regarding the hearing on the **Protect our Kids Act** scheduled for **December 12, 2012**.

Does Every Child Matter?

America, let's be honest. In our political landscape of elections, budgets, deadlines and competing interests, children are not the priority. Children can't make campaign contributions or vote but they are simply put, the future. We have an ethical and economic imperative to protect them. When the day comes that the youngest in our society need to take up the reigns, will they be ready? Or will we see in our nation, legions of young people damaged by years of abuse that never have much of a chance for the American Dream. Or even more tragically will some of the visionaries of our future never live past the age of 4 and die at the hands of a caretaker? Just imagine for a moment the effect the tragic death of a child has on a family, a community and the nation.

According to a report put out by Every Child Matters Education Fund in Washington, DC, an estimated 2 thousand children are killed nationally each year by child abuse and neglect. These deaths are senseless, tragic, and can be prevented. Deaths by child abuse are a mere fraction of the 3 million reported child abuse and neglect allegations each year in the United States. With early intervention and education, many of these child abuse and neglect related deaths can be prevented. Additionally, with proper changes to regulations combined with coordination across states, improvements can be made. It is time to take a stand and support the future of our Nation by supporting The Protect our Kids Act (H.R. 3653 and S. 1984). Every

Child Matters Education Fund, along with the Coalition to End Child Abuse Deaths, worked with Congress to author this bill, which calls for a national commission to study child abuse fatalities and to make recommendations for our Nation's child welfare system.

The National Coalition to End Child Abuse Deaths (NCECAD) was formed out of concern about the increasing number of child abuse deaths across the Nation. NCECAD is composed of representatives from the National Association of Social Workers, National District Attorneys Association, and National Children's Alliance, National Center for the Review and Prevention of Child Deaths, and Every Child Matters Education Fund.

Last December, The Protect our Kids Act of 2011, also known as S. 1984 and H.R. 3653, was introduced to Congress. It is supported by Senators Kerry (D-MA) and Collins (R-ME), along with Ranking Member Congressman Lloyd Doggett (D-TX) and Representative Joseph Crowley (D-NY). With the lack of funding and attention, grassroots action is critical in order for this bill to succeed.

Child abuse and neglect have long-term physical and emotional consequences on the individual child, their families, and the communities in which they live. Studies of child abuse and neglect show that abuse leads to problems in society such as poverty, crime, gang affiliations, low self-esteem, alcohol and drug use, dropout rates, and teen pregnancies. Preventing child abuse before it starts through education and intervention programs could reduce the amount of money spent by our government each year. Current statistics show that child abuse and neglect cost the nation approximately 109.1 billion dollars each year. Unfortunately, we also hold the highest rate of death from child abuse in an industrialized nation.

As graduate students at the University of Southern California, School of Social Work, in cooperation with Every Child Matters Education Fund, we ask for your action on this important

piece of legislation because each and every child really does matter. Sign the petition at
<http://tinyurl.com/cks3cpp>

Carolina Altamarino, Jodie Bechtel, Stephanie Doss and Anna Flores

Candidates, Masters of Social Work

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