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**\*\*\* TUESDAY, JULY 12, 2011 AT 10:00 A.M. \*\*\***

TESTIMONY OF TAMARA TUNIE, SPOKESPERSON  
NATIONAL COALITION TO END CHILD ABUSE DEATHS

before the

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES US  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Hearing on "Child Deaths Due to Maltreatment"

July 12, 2011

Good morning, Chairman Davis, Ranking Member Doggett and Members of the Subcommittee. My name is Tamara Tunie. Many people know me in my role as Dr. Melinda Warner, the Medical Examiner, on Law and Order Special Victims Unit. However, I am here today in my role as a concerned citizen and as the spokesperson for the National Coalition to End Child Abuse Deaths. The Coalition is made up of five national organizations that came together over a common concern for the growing number of child abuse and neglect deaths in the United States. Those organizations are: National Association of Social Workers, National Children's Alliance, National District Attorneys Association, Every Child Matters Education Fund and the National Center for Child Death Review.

I am honored to be able to speak to you today. On Law and Order, we investigate fictionalized crimes and often have to deal with difficult story-lines, but nothing compares to the real and tragic cases that we hear about with increasing regularity in the national headlines. Caylee Anthony in Florida, Marchella Pierce from my home in New York City, and the gruesome story of Nubia Barahona, also in Florida. The unfortunate truth about these deaths is how common they are. Since becoming the Coalition's spokesperson, I have learned about the list of American children dying at the hands of those who are supposed to love and protect them, and I am here to say that the need for action is critical.

Unfortunately, the most startling truth about death from child abuse is how common it is. As we have heard today, an estimated 2,500 children die each year from abuse and neglect, that's 7 children a day.

It is not enough to feel saddened when hearing about the loss of innocent lives. We have an obligation as adults and citizens, to protect those who have no power to protect themselves and no voice to address the powers that be, to prevent these fatalities. The first step in ending child abuse and neglect deaths is awareness of

the problem, including the accurate collection of data regarding the number and circumstances of child deaths from maltreatment. We are here today, because Chairman Dave Camp, Chairman Geoff Davis, Ranking member Doggett and the members of the Subcommittee on Human Resources, believe that this important issue deserves attention. On behalf of the Coalition, I want to thank you for holding a hearing on child abuse and neglect fatalities, and for your efforts to bring an end to the preventable deaths of children like Caylee, Marchella and Nubia in the United States.

Thank you for hearing my testimony.