



June 13, 2017

The Honorable Kristi Noem
U.S. House of Representatives
2457 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Judy Chu
U.S. House of Representatives
2423 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Noem and Congresswoman Chu:

Our organizations write in support of HR 2857, set for markup in the House Ways and Means Committee on Wednesday, June 14. The bill is aimed at supporting the use of residential substance use disorder treatment options to enable parents and children to live together in the treatment facility.

HR 2857 would allow federal Title IV-E funding to be drawn down by states for foster children who could, for the first time, be formally placed into these treatment facilities along with their parents. The foster children who would benefit from the bill would otherwise be placed with a relative or foster parent, or in a congregate care facility.

In general, the movement in treatment of a variety of issues, including substance use disorder, is trending toward the provision of “whole-family” care that addresses various needs of the entire family. The intersection of substance use and child maltreatment is well-documented, and more programs are seeking to serve the entire family when possible to address substance use issues as well as mental health needs, abuse and neglect issues, and the children’s educational and developmental needs. We appreciate that the bill would consider these residential treatment facilities to be allowable foster care placements and enable states to receive Title IV-E funding for federally eligible children placed in such facilities with their parents.

We note that the contents of this legislation also are included in HR 253, the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA). While the provisions included in HR 2857 are not controversial, our organizations have major concerns with the broader FFPSA. We would need significant amendments to improve other sections of that bill before we could support it. Should the underlying legislation begin to move, we urge a full consideration, with stakeholder engagement, committee hearings and a meaningful opportunity for organizations such as ours to request amendments.

For these reasons, our organizations are in support of HR 2857.

Sincerely,

Will Lightbourne, Director
California Department of Social Services

Susanna Kniffen, Policy Director
Children Now

Amy Lemley, Executive Director
John Burton Advocates for Youth

Justin Garrett, Legislative Representative
California State Association of Counties

Frank Mecca, Executive Director
County Welfare Directors Association of California

Brandon Nichols, Interim Director
Los Angeles County Department of Child and Family Services

Angie Schwartz, Policy Director
Alliance for Children's Rights