



National Association of Public
Child Welfare Administrators

an affiliate of the American Public Human Services Association

October 20, 2009

Representative Michelle Bachmann
House of Representatives
107 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representative Bachmann:

On behalf of the American Public Human Services Association and its affiliate, the National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators, we respectfully submit comments regarding "The School Choice for Foster Kids Act" (H.R. 2072).

APHSA is a nonprofit, bipartisan organization representing state and local human service professionals for over 76 years. NAPCWA, created as an affiliate in 1983, works to enhance and improve public policy and administration of services for children, youth, and families. As the only organization solely devoted to representing administrators of state and local public child welfare agencies, NAPCWA brings an informed view of the problems today's families are facing to the forefront of child welfare policy. Public child welfare administrators work diligently to ensure that all children in care receive quality education and improving their educational needs is paramount. NAPCWA has concerns regarding H.R. 2072.

H.R. 2072 amends John E. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program and authorizes states to use their educational tuition vouchers for foster children of all ages to attend private school. States use these dollars to provide independent living services, housing resources and other support for foster youth. Chafee and ETV provide limited funds to improve older youth's educational and vocational needs. Consequently, child welfare agencies use state funds to adequately support these programs.

H.R. 2072 would require states to use their allocations to provide youth with private school education, without increased funding. ETV state allocations are minimal, ranging from \$71,000 in smaller states up to \$8.5 million, yet they serve a large number of youth. This issue is extremely problematic for states, especially in challenging economic times.

Private schools are also costly; tuition ranges from \$20,000 or greater. Foster youth receive \$5,000 for ETVs, which does not adequately pay for post-secondary and vocational institutions, even for private school. Although children are mostly eligible for ETV at age 16, allowing states to make vouchers available for all children in care, regardless of their age, does not follow the intent of Chafee and inhibits the program's capacity.

In its current form, NAPCWA does not support the legislation. Rather, we encourage Congress to increase Chafee resources before adding provisions to expand those clients served by the program.

Please do not hesitate to contact Rashida Brown at (202) 682-0100 ext. 225 or Courteney Holden at (202) 682-0100 ex. 249 if you have any additional questions. We look forward to work with you on revising this legislation.

Sincerely,

Anita Light, Director
National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators