



American Public Human Services Association



National Association of Public
Child Welfare Administrators

an affiliate of the American Public Human Services Association

September 21, 2010

The Honorable Jim McDermott, Chairman
The Honorable John Linder, Ranking Member
House Ways and Means Committee
Income and Family Support Subcommittee
Rayburn B 317
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman McDermott and Ranking Member Linder:

Thank you for your bipartisan leadership in supporting state flexibility through the use of IV-E waivers. The American Public Human Services Association and its affiliate, the National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators, support H.R. 6156 which renews the Health and Human Services Secretary's authority to approve demonstration projects designed to test innovative strategies in State child welfare programs.

While we support H.R. 6156, we believe it is critical to address restructuring of federal child welfare financing in the near future. Financing should be aligned with the goals and outcomes expected of states. In October 2009, NAPCWA's Executive Committee commissioned a workgroup comprised of child welfare administrators from large, medium and small states, as well as state and locally administered states, and counties. The workgroup developed recommendations on how to restructure the current Title IV-E financing mechanism. Introducing legislation on comprehensive finance reform that addresses the proposals outlined by NAPCWA is essential if all states are to benefit from the opportunities available to those few states who apply for a waiver.

Title IV-E waivers were instrumental in helping states to be innovative when supporting children, youth and families. Waivers gave states the flexibility to target services and supports to best meet the needs of at-risk populations. Waivers provided the opportunity for states to offer guardianship to relatives who wanted to serve as a permanent family for young people, yet did not want to sever parental rights. States such as Florida and counties such as Los Angeles, Calif., have significantly reduced the number of children who languish in care. The number of children experiencing repeat abuse has also decreased.

State practice helped inform federal partners that IV-E should be applied in ways other than foster care. States operating demonstration programs should be allowed to continue to do so.

The overarching premise of IV-E waivers is to prevent children from entering the foster care system in the first place. Waivers play a critical role and are a step forward toward improving the system. We strongly encourage Congress to pass comprehensive child welfare financing reform consistent with what has been learned through the waivers. Federal funds should be aligned so that states have the ability to use resources to keep children at home when it is safe to do so and services to ensure that children do not languish in foster care.

Thank you for your dedication. We look forward to the continued work of improving services and outcomes for vulnerable children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cari DeSantis".

Cari DeSantis,
Executive Director, APHSA

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Erin Sullivan Sutton".

Erin Sullivan Sutton
President, NAPCWA