



National Association of Public
Child Welfare Administrators

an affiliate of the American Public Human Services Association

October 12, 2009

The Honorable Blanche Lincoln
United States Senate
Dirksen Senate Office Building, Suite 355
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Lincoln:

On behalf of the National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators (NAPCWA), we appreciate your leadership and strong interest in strengthening the workforce to improve positive outcomes for children, youth and families. NAPCWA is very pleased to support the Child Welfare Workforce Improvement Act of 2009.

Workforce can refer to many different agency staff, including individuals who work directly with children and parents to keep children safely at home, those that work with children in foster care and their birth and foster parents. Quality supervision and leadership are also critical components of a high quality child welfare system.

A well-trained, highly skilled, well-resourced and appropriately deployed workforce is foundational to the child welfare agency's ability to achieve the best outcomes for those it serves. The workforce is the most important and most expensive resource child welfare agencies invest in to achieve their goals and objectives. A credible, efficient and effective workforce can earn the trust of children, youth and families, stakeholders and the community at-large.

Today, public child welfare agencies face many barriers when it comes to workforce issues. The average tenure of a child welfare agency worker, who is often called upon to make life and death decisions for children, is less than two years. Heavy workloads coupled with insufficient staffing levels lead to extremely high turnover in many states and counties.

Child welfare directors are particularly grateful that the Senate bill allows states to claim IV-E training dollars whether a worker provides services to Title IV-E foster care, guardianship or adoption assistance children. This provision helps reduce paperwork requirements and allows the workforce to focus more on the needs of the family.

Child welfare directors are pleased that states may use private resources as their match regardless of whether these resources were under the states' administrative control. Finally, child welfare

directors truly appreciate the focus on incentives, as opposed to penalties, for workforce improvement through an increased FMAP rate of 3 percent for administrative resources.

As part NAPCWA's Positioning Public Child Welfare Initiative: Strengthening Families in the 21st Century, we released guidance to the field on effective workforce practice this September. The guidance focuses on the need for agencies to conduct an environmental scan, similar to those made available through grants in the legislation. These scans help administrators gain a better understanding of available community resources, what the population needs are as a whole, and what external factors exist to create both opportunities and challenges for the agency. We strongly recommend Congress consider a provision that allows states to utilize workforce grants without having to provide a match, especially in times of economic uncertainty.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact Courteney Holden, senior legislative associate, at (202) 682-0100 x249 or at Courteney.Holden@aphsa.org. You may also contact Rashida Brown, legislative associate, at (202) 682-0100 x225 or Rashida.Brown@aphsa.org.

Again, we thank you for your leadership. We look forward to working with you to see these workforce improvements enacted.

Sincerely,

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

Erin Sullivan Sutton, J.D., President
National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators