



County Welfare Directors Association of California
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July 31, 2008

The Honorable Max Baucus
Chairman, Senate Finance Committee
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member, Senate Finance Committee
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Baucus and Ranking Member Grassley:

Representing the human services directors from each of California's 58 counties, the County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA) enthusiastically endorses the outlines of the Chairman's Mark of the *Improved Adoption Incentives and Relative Guardianship Support Act*. Building upon Senator Grassley's bill introduced earlier this year, we are very pleased to know that the subsidized guardianship provisions are included and strengthened and that a new provision has been added to provide states the option to extend IV-E foster care assistance to youth up to the age of 21.

Title IV-E Relative Guardianship Support: California's counties have partnered with the state to administer and finance the Kinship Guardianship Assistance Payment (Kin-GAP) Program. Created in 2000, the program serves approximately 16,000 families by establishing a permanency option for children under the care of a relative. We are very proud of the program's progress and successful outcomes for Kin-GAP children.

Because of our state and county success, we fully support Chairman's Mark to establish a ground-breaking federal IV-E option for relative guardianship payments. We also support the inclusion of a demonstration program to determine whether relaxing some of the foster care licensing requirements for relative guardians serves to increase permanency outcomes for children.

Children Aging Out of Foster Care: CWDA is very pleased to support the provision in the Chairman's Mark to give states the option to provide IV-E services to youth up to age 21. In our state, about 4,200 foster youth who turn 18 are emancipated each year. This provision will provide much needed support in improving the frequently poor outcomes foster youth experience when making the transition to independence.

Adoption Incentives Program: CWDA supports the reauthorization of the Adoption Incentives Program. California continues to vigorously pursue adoptions, with nearly 7,400 adoptions finalized in federal fiscal year (FFY) 2006. Adoption is one key component in an overall effort by California counties' to reduce the number of children in our custody. Due to the structure of the current incentive system, however, California has not earned incentives since FFY 2001. CWDA supports provisions updating the baseline year to 2007 and increasing the payments for finalized adoptions.

CWDA thanks you for your collaboration in crafting and marking up this bipartisan bill. We look forward to reviewing the legislative language and providing constructive comments so that it is enacted into law this year.

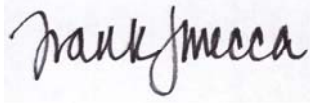
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If you have questions about our views, please have your staff contact Tom Joseph, Director of CWDA's Washington Office at 202.898.1444 or tj@wafed.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frank Mecca". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Frank Mecca

Executive Director