

June 14, 2016

The Honorable [NAME]
[United States Senate OR U.S. House of Representatives]

Dear [Senator, Representative OR Congress(wo)man NAME]:

On behalf of [YOUR ORGANIZATION], I am writing to ask for your full support of the *Family First Prevention Services Act (H.R. 5456)* introduced today by House Ways and Means Human Resources Subcommittee Chairman Vern Buchanan (R-FL) and joined by other bi-partisan original co-sponsors. As you may know, there are 8.3 million children—almost 11% of America’s children—who live with a parent who is alcoholic or needs treatment for illicit drug abuse. About two-thirds of the children who enter the child welfare system are affected by parents with substance use disorders. When children and youth in foster care are asked what they need the most, they often ask for substance use disorder treatment for their parents so that their family can stay together.

Quality substance abuse prevention and treatment is one of the cornerstones of a strong and effective child welfare system. H.R. 5456 takes several critical steps to ensure that parents and children receive the full range of supportive services they need to heal and thrive. By allowing federal IV-E dollars to be used in a time-limited way for evidence-based prevention services, including mental health, substance abuse prevention and in-home skill-based programs, the proposed legislation provides an unprecedented opportunity for child welfare agencies to expand the services parents need to continue to care for their children safely without unnecessary foster care placements.

[BRIEF STATEMENT ABOUT YOUR ORGANIZATION]. We strongly support the following key points of this proposed legislation:

- Allowing states to draw down Title IV-E foster care maintenance payments on behalf of children who are placed in residential family treatment settings with a parent who is receiving treatment and allowing for the provision of family reunification services to any child in foster care and for up to 15 months after a child is reunified with his or her biological family
- Reauthorizing the Regional Partnership Grant program and providing funding to state and regional grantees seeking to provide evidence-based services to prevent child abuse and neglect related to parental substance use disorders in addition to updating the program to specifically address the opioid and heroin epidemic
- Enhancing the protections and oversight for Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTP), improving and expediting an effective assessment process, and increasing judicial oversight of placement decisions on an ongoing basis

Untreated substance use disorders are among the most critical and devastating crises facing our nation’s children and families. Thanks to the leadership and bipartisanship demonstrated by members of the House Ways and Means and Senate Finance Committees, H.R. 5456 offers a range of innovative solutions designed to keep children and families together and provide the services and supports they need to lead healthy and productive lives. We are deeply appreciative of your full support of this bill and are confident that, if passed, it will continue to help thousands children and families, now and for years to come.

Sincerely,
[NAME]

[TITLE]