

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 22, 2009

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Sebelius,

Congratulations on your confirmation as Secretary of Health and Human Services. We look forward to working with you on the many challenges and opportunities ahead of us. While we realize there will always be a number of pressing items on your agenda, we urge you not to forget one issue that is near and dear to our hearts: our children in foster care.

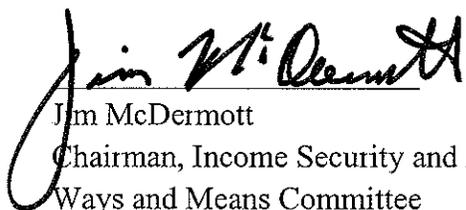
More than 800,000 American children spend some time in foster care each year, most because they have been victims of sexual or physical abuse or neglect. To assist them, our nation spends more than \$25 billion per year on the child welfare system, of which more than \$12 billion comes from the federal government. In fiscal year 2008, the largest share of this funding (\$6.8 billion) was used on Title IV-E programs for foster care and adoption assistance, whereas only \$763 million was used on IV-B programs for child and family services to keep families intact and promote innovative practices. Keeping families together before foster care becomes a necessary option is not only in the best interest of the children, but also reduces the financial burden on the foster care system.

Despite efforts at the Federal and State level, as well as the tireless efforts of our child welfare workforce, our system fails to produce the results needed to make our foster children thrive: too many children do not receive basic needs such as health care and education, are left without supportive, permanent families, remain permanently separated from their siblings, and many "age out" of the system without the security of a biological or adoptive family to fall back on. Though the current system aims to ensure "safety, permanency, and well-being," these goals are often unmet.

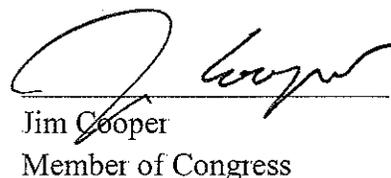
Last year, the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act was passed and signed into law with unanimous support and marked the most significant reform to the child welfare system in over a decade. However, much remains to be done, and we have an extraordinary opportunity to continue our work to improve the system. We look forward to working with the Obama Administration and welcome your leadership at HHS as an opportunity to draw attention to our child welfare system and improve outcomes for foster children in the

coming years. As you weigh the priorities at HHS, please keep our foster children – and the continued, urgent need for child welfare reform – in mind. We stand ready to work with you to create a system that truly ensures the safety, permanency, and well-being of all of our nation's children.

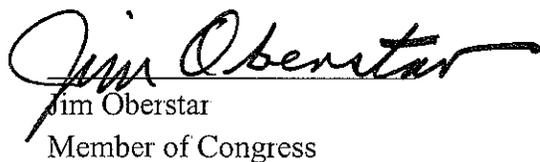
Sincerely,



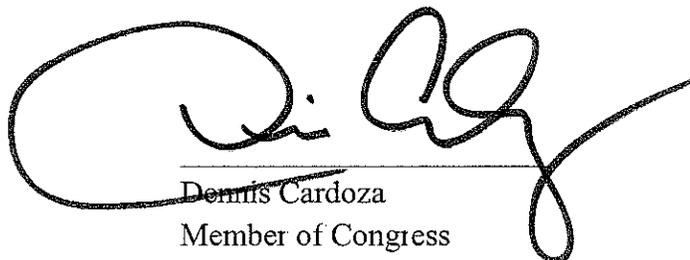
Jim McDermott
Chairman, Income Security and Family Support Subcommittee
Ways and Means Committee



Jim Cooper
Member of Congress



Jim Oberstar
Member of Congress



Dennis Cardoza
Member of Congress



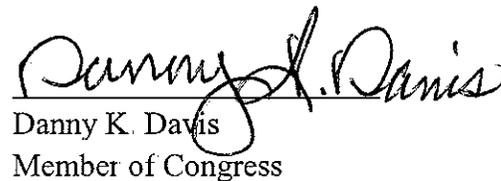
John Conyers
Member of Congress



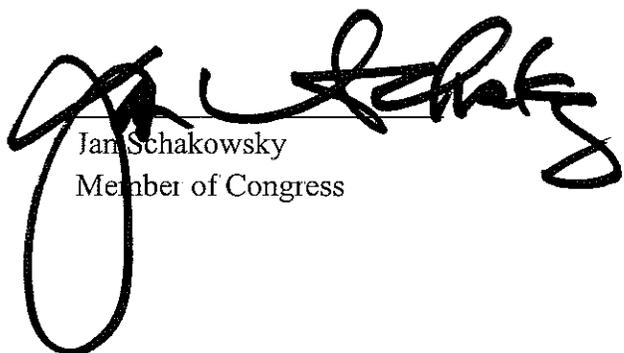
Rosa DeLauro
Member of Congress



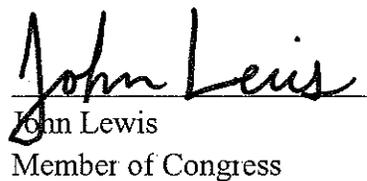
Pete Stark
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



John Lewis
Member of Congress

Patrick J. Kennedy

Patrick J. Kennedy
Member of Congress

Jim Langevin

Jim Langevin
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Kendrick B. Meek
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Chaka Fattah

Chaka Fattah
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Shelley Berkley

Shelley Berkley
Member of Congress

Keith Ellison

Keith Ellison
Member of Congress