

The Honorable Debbie A. Stabenow
U.S. Senate
133 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

September 29, 2009

Dear Senator Stabenow:

The undersigned national child welfare and mental health organizations and similarly impacted child- and family-strengthening organizations wholeheartedly thank you for your ardent support of therapeutic foster care (TFC), as evidenced by your amendment (Amendment 278/Stabenow C-6) that was recently added to the Senate Finance Committee Chairman's Mark of the America's Healthy Future Act. You were a critical champion in rejecting harmful Medicaid regulations issued by the previous Administration and your advocacy for children's mental health is furthered by this TFC amendment.

Children who come into contact with the child welfare system receiving placement and in-home services have a higher rate of physical and mental health issues, stemming either from abuse and/or neglect or from preexisting health conditions and unmet long-term service needs. Before they walk through the service delivery door, many of these children have been exposed to multiple traumas, including domestic violence, physical and emotional abuse, neglect, community violence, and exposure to other risk factors such as parental mental health problems, substance abuse, and poverty. Some of the most vulnerable of this population receive much needed assistance and medical intervention in therapeutic foster care (TFC) placements. TFC provides medically necessary, cost effective services to at least 50,000 children with severe mental and behavioral health needs in a community-based environment. Recommended in the 1999 U.S. Surgeon General Report on Mental Health as an effective intervention, TFC is evidence-informed and results in positive outcomes in terms of the child's behavior and maintaining permanency.

Children in foster care need help and support and we are thankful that you have shed light on them in the current health reform debate. Your amendment provides the first-ever federal statutory definition of therapeutic foster care and protects Medicaid reimbursement for the treatment central to therapeutic foster care. This amendment lays the essential groundwork for creating a new Medicaid service category for TFC, as contained in your legislation the Medicaid Services Restoration Act, S. 1217. We look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure that therapeutic foster care stays in the current health reform legislation, that comprehensive health reform legislation is enacted this year, and down the road, to enacting S. 1217.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Children and Families
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association of Children's Residential Centers (AACRC)

American Humane Association
American Mental Health Counselors Association
Anxiety Disorders Association of America
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Black Administrators in Child Welfare, Inc.
Child Welfare League of America
Coalition on Human Needs
Every Child Matters Education Fund
First Focus
Foster Care Alumni of America
Foster Family-based Treatment Association
Generations United
John Burton Foundation
KidsPeace National Centers
Lutheran Services in America
Mental Health America
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association of Social Workers
National Black Child Development Institute
National Collaboration for Youth
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
National Foster Care Coalition
National Foster Parent Association
National Indian Child Welfare Association
National Organization of State Associations for Children
The Arc of the United States
The MENTOR Network
The Rebecca Project for Human Rights
United Cerebral Palsy
Voices for America's Children
Youth Law Center