



May 20, 2008

The Honorable Charles Grassley, Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Finance
United States Senate
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Grassley:

On behalf of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, please accept our sincere appreciation for your leadership on behalf of children adopted through the foster care system. Your introduction of the Improved Adoption Incentives and Relative Guardianship Support Act of 2008 is critically important in the lives of tens of thousands of America's most vulnerable children.

The Foundation is a nonprofit public charity dedicated to dramatically increasing the adoptions of the more than 127,000 children in North America's foster care systems waiting to be adopted. Created by Wendy's founder, Dave Thomas, who was adopted as a child, the Foundation leads signature national service programs and works to streamline the adoption process and make adoption more affordable for families. As the only foundation dedicated exclusively to foster care adoption, we are driven by Dave's simple value: Do what's best for the child. And that is exactly what your bill does.

The Improved Adoption Incentives and Relative Guardianship Support Act, which provides incentives to states that increase adoptions as well as federal support to all adoptive families, will be a critical compliment to the work we do through our *Wendy's Wonderful Kids* recruitment program. *Wendy's Wonderful Kids* supports 105 adoption recruiters in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. This signature program of the Foundation has a very aggressive goal to provide funding for more than 220 recruiters and help 8,000 - 10,000 children be adopted or matched with families by 2010. We are proud that the program has already helped more than 1,000 children find their forever families. But as you can see, we have quite a way to go and this legislation will make a significant difference in helping us assure families for children, while providing the support necessary to maintain the families formed.

We also appreciate the bill's focus on relative guardianship for those foster youth where adoption and reunification are not options. No child should have to age out of the system without a family.

During the initial policy discussions of the landmark Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) in 1997, Dave Thomas testified before your committee on the importance of finding nurturing parents to protect and guide foster children into adulthood. I know he would be very proud of your efforts. Thank you for this vital work on behalf of our nation's children and families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Soronen", followed by a horizontal line.

Rita Soronen
Executive Director