



April 25, 2023

The Honorable Charles Grassley
United States Senate
135 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Maggie Hassan
United States Senate
324 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Dan Kildee
United States House of Representatives
200 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Randy Feenstra
United State House of Representatives
1440 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators Grassley and Hassan and Representatives Kildee and Feenstra,

On behalf of foster and adoptive families, kinship caregivers and advocates for children and youth in foster care, we write to express support and endorsement for the **Recruiting Families Using Data Act of 2023**.

Our organizations bring deep expertise on the issue of foster and adoptive parent recruitment and retention. Like you, we are deeply troubled by the many reports of foster youth sleeping in hotels or office lobbies due to lack of available foster care placement with families. While the issue of placement shortages is not new, today's challenges are at crisis levels. And kids are paying the price. We attribute current shortages to a number of factors: severe workforce shortages; the mental health needs of children, youth and caregivers; and lack of resources that caregivers need to support and care for youth, many of whom have significant mental and behavioral health needs.

As caregivers, we know first-hand about the challenges children in foster care face before, during and after their foster care journeys due to trauma and adversity they've experienced in their young years. We also know what a positive difference it makes in their lives when they are cared for by stable, supportive family environments.

While we wish that no child ever needed the safety of foster care, we firmly believe the foster care safety net is a vital community resource for children who cannot remain safely at home. Kin and non-kin foster families are the backbone of this safety net and therefore it is important for child welfare agencies to recruit and retain a diversity of foster families so that children

entering foster care can be matched with relatives and families who can meet their unique needs, nurture their healing and well-being, and help maintain familial bonds. Many years of experience tell us that this requires agencies to utilize effective, data-driven approaches.

The **Using Data to Recruit Families Act** is a timely and urgently needed proposal. It speaks to the challenges that child welfare agencies across the country are facing and offers much-needed help. Specifically, the proposal would generate clear federal guidance to help state and local child welfare agencies plan and implement best practices in foster parent recruitment and retention.

The Act would make key reforms that align with the changes foster families and kinship caregivers have been calling for and that are essential to achieving the best outcomes for children and families. These include:

- **Promoting better outcomes for children in foster care by utilizing data.** By requiring agencies to improve their collection and use of data to establish recruitment and retention goals, assess needs, and measure progress, the Act equips agencies to make significant progress towards improving the stability of foster care placements, increasing kinship placements, and improving recruitment and retention of families to care for teens, sibling groups and other special populations.
- **Engaging birth, foster, kinship and adoptive families as key partners** so that their expertise and experiences can guide the agencies in making ongoing improvements to recruiting, licensing, training, supporting families who are caring for children and youth in foster care. We enthusiastically support the provision calling on agencies to stand up or support family advisory boards.
- **Ensuring accountability and transparency.** We applaud the provisions in the Act that call on both state and federal child welfare agencies to generate data-driven reports on foster family capacity and congregate care utilization, and to collect and share feedback from foster and adoptive families and youth regarding licensure, training, support and reasons why foster families quit fostering. States that utilize data-driven approaches such as these provide compelling examples of the need to scale up data-driven approaches in foster parent recruitment and retention.

Children do best in families. This includes children and youth in foster care. We applaud your leadership and commitment to developing bipartisan and research-based solutions to strengthening an incredibly important safety net for children and youth.

We are pleased to lend our support to the **Using Data to Recruit Families Act of 2023** and look forward to encouraging your colleagues in Congress to lend their support so these reforms can be enacted on behalf of children, youth and families involved in foster care across the country.

National Organizations

National Foster Parent Association

Voice for Adoption

North American Council on Adoptable Children

Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption

Family Focused Treatment Association

Creating a Family: Support • Train • Strengthen / Foster • Adoptive • Kinship

The Foster Care Institute

Alabama

Alabama Foster and Adoptive Parent Association

Delaware

Children and Families First Delaware

Florida

Florida Foster & Adoptive Parent Association

Fostering Faith Hope & Love of Lake and Sumter Counties (Florida)

Kansas

Kansas Foster and Adoptive Parent Association

FosterAdopt Connect

Kentucky

Maryland

Maryland Resource Parent Association

Michigan

Fostering Forward Michigan, Inc.

Missouri

FosterAdopt Connect

Nebraska

Nebraska Foster & Adoptive Parent Association

New Hampshire

New Hampshire Foster & Adoptive Parent Association

New Mexico

New Mexico Child First Network

North Carolina

Foster Family Alliance of North Carolina

Thompson Child and Family Focus

Children's Home Society of North Carolina

Strong Able Youth Speaking Out

Nash County Department of Social Services

Ohio

Adoption Network Cleveland

Oregon

Oregon Resource Family Association

Texas

Texas Foster Family Association

Vermont

Voices for Vermont's Children

Rhode Island

Foster Forward

Adoption Rhode Island

Washington

Foster Parent Alliance of Washington State

West Virginia

West Virginia Foster, Adoptive and Kinship Parents Network