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A Coalition of Child Welfare Leaders Meet with Congress to Encourage Action Supporting Positive Outcomes for Our Youth

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**Contact: Arnie Eby
800-557-5238
arnie@nfpaonline.org**

Last week, National Foster Parent Association (NFPA), and their State Affiliates (CoSA) & FOSTER PARENT LEADERS met with Congressional leaders to discuss and encourage action on several key pieces of legislation that could impact the our youth, especially those at risk.

The solutions the coalition suggested to policymakers in supporting positive outcomes for youth include all domains of their life: education, health, mental health, family and permanence, and more.

[Local leaders from [. . . .] included: (an include personal observations or descriptions of meetings with congressional leaders, briefing, event, or advocacy). Photo of local CoSA members with caption identifying those in photo is helpful.]

NFPA/CoSA State Leaders and foster parents met 1:1 with members from their state's Congressional delegation and then led a briefing with bipartisan, bicameral staff of the House Ways and Means Committee and Senate Finance Committee The meetings and briefing were conducted in collaboration with: *Journey to Success, Youth Law Center, Child Welfare League of America, and Foster Club.*

For children and young people who are dealing with domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse, abandonment, homelessness, and other traumatic events, foster care has become the safety net that families and community leaders reach out to in those times of need.

Congress has a long history of caring about outcomes of youth in foster care. But foster parents need support from local, state, and national leaders. Our insights provided four areas of need:

ISSUE 1: FOSTER PARENT SHORTAGE/TURNOVER

The most critical step is for youth and foster families to have access to a core set of supports. There are recommendations for how Congress can legislate in Title IV-E to create “**core**

supports” for family-based foster care. These include: Daycare, 24/7 mental health care, certified caregivers for relief/respice, peer-to-peer support for parents and children, and training.

NFPA & CoSA recommends support of the Recruiting Families Using Data Act, H.R. [3058/S. 1313](#) which will improve recruitment, retention, support and training for kin and foster families

ISSUE 2: HOTELING AND LACK OF FAMILY-BASED PLACEMENT OPTIONS

Children deserve family based settings rather than hotels, offices, and institutions. Excellent care for youth in foster care through caring, nurturing, trained and well-supported foster parents are a critical piece of expanding family based placements for young people who are at risk of being placed in inappropriate placements like hotels and offices.

ISSUE 3: ADDRESSING UNMET YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS

Children in foster care often have complex mental health needs, and many deal with the impact of trauma. If they don't have the opportunity to heal, they will face more significant challenges in school, work, and relationships.

NFPA & CoSA supports the Foster Youth Mental Health Act, [S. 2836](#), which would create a national navigation program to support the mental health and well-being of foster youth and former foster youth and provide assistance to foster, adoptive parents, kinship guardians, and parents.

We also support legislation from last Congress, [S. 3761](#) of 2021, The Treatment Family Care Services Act, which would provide a standardized definition of treatment family care (formerly therapeutic foster care) and would require Medicaid to provide guidance to the states on opportunities to provide treatment family care.

ISSUE 4: WORKFORCE SHORTAGES

Overwhelmed caseworkers with overly high caseloads aren't able to attend to the needs of children, youth or caregivers.

We recommend creating new competitive grants in Title IV-B of the Social Security Act with additional funding for states to address both recruitment and retention, and strengthening the workforce and ensuring caseworkers have manageable workloads will increase support for foster parents and lead to more stability for children in care.

For more information or to learn more about becoming a foster parent or helping support these recommendations, please contact us at: info@nfpaonline.org.

The National Foster Parent Association's Mission is to be a respected national voice for Foster, Kinship and Adoptive Parents through networking, education and advocacy.

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