



November 11, 2019

The Honorable Chuck Grassley  
Chairman  
Committee on Finance  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Danny K. Davis  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Worker and Family Support  
Committee on Ways and Means  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Finance  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jackie Walorski  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Worker and Family Support  
Committee on Ways and Means  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Grassley, Ranking Member Wyden, Chairman Davis and Ranking Member Walorski,

On behalf of the Children's Defense Fund (CDF), I am writing to share our endorsement of the *Family First Transition Act*.

CDF has worked for more than four decades to improve outcomes for children and families in or at risk of entering the child welfare system, and has advocated for comprehensive child welfare finance reform that would allow for major federal investments in upfront prevention and intervention programs and services to help keep children safely with their families. We are committed to providing a strong, effective and independent voice for all of the children of America who cannot vote, lobby or speak for themselves.

The passage of the *Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018 (Family First)* was a pivotal moment for the child welfare community, and one that CDF championed from its inception. It signaled a long-overdue shift toward prevention, giving states and tribes the resources they need to support families in crisis, preventing abuse and neglect so children can stay home with strong families. The child welfare system is built around the fundamental promise that all children deserve the opportunity to grow up in safe, stable and loving families. Implemented effectively, *Family First* is an important step toward fulfilling that promise.

The Family First Transition Act provides the critical support that states and tribes need to seize the historic opportunities of *Family First*. The funding supports provided in the bill will allow jurisdictions to meet the financial costs required to effectively make the transition to Family First and allow a smooth transition from waivers. Along with this investment, the delay of the 50 percent well-supported requirement will provide states the flexibility they need to design prevention programs that meet the specific needs of their families and communities. Taken together, this package of supports will provide states and tribes resources they need to protect children from the trauma of neglect, abuse and removal from their families.

Lastly, we are humbled that the *Family First Transition Act* renames the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program (PSSF) in honor of MaryLee Allen, CDF's late Director of Policy. MaryLee devoted her more than 40 year long career to protecting children and strengthening families and PSSF was among the first of many reforms she worked tirelessly to help enact. We are very moved that the *Family First Transition Act* honors her with such a fitting tribute.

Thank you for your leadership and for your commitment to ensuring that all children have the opportunity to grow up in strong, stable and loving families. The *Family First Transition Act* presents a bold investment in protecting our most vulnerable children and its passage will be a crucial step toward realizing the dream of *Family First*. We proudly endorse the *Family First Transition Act* and urge congress to pass it without delay. If we can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact Steven Olender, CDF's Senior Policy Associate for Child Welfare and Mental Health, at (202) 662-3698 or [solender@childrensdefense.org](mailto:solender@childrensdefense.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Max Lesko', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Max Lesko  
National Executive Director