



May 28, 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 National Council For Adoption (NCFA), I am writing in regard to the Improved Adoption Incentives and Relative Guardianship Support Act of 2008. If enacted, this bill would benefit children by making several extremely positive changes to the nation's child welfare system which would promote adoption and other forms of permanency.

The bill has many positive provisions. It would promote adoption by reauthorizing and improving the highly successful Adoption Incentive Program, which played a major part in increasing adoptions out of foster care from 30,000 in 1997 to 50,000 adoptions per year for seven consecutive years, from 2000 – 2006. This legislation would also increase adoption incentives for states – and therefore adoptions – by increasing the incentive payments and establishing 2007 as the program's new "base year" against which future performance would be measured. The continuation of greater incentives to states for adoptions of older children and children with special needs is also welcome.

The bill would make all children with special needs adopted from foster care eligible for federal adoption assistance payments by exempting them from current income eligibility requirements. Many adoptive parents depend on these payments to cover the costs associated with welcoming these children into their hearts and homes. By waiving income eligibility requirements for children adopted from foster care with special needs, this bill helps to defray the costs associated with adoption for a significant number of parents.

Finally, the bill would also establish relative guardianship as a permanency option for those children for whom courts have ruled that neither reunification nor adoption are viable permanency options, and allow states to receive federal reimbursement for assistance payments made to relative guardians. Children in foster care for whom guardianship is the best option deserve subsidies comparable to those for adoption.

All children deserve to grow up in a safe, loving family. The Improved Adoption Incentives and Relative Guardianship Support Act of 2008 is laudable for promoting adoption and other forms of permanency for children in foster care. If you have any questions regarding NCFA's position on this bill, please do not hesitate to contact me at 703-299-6633, or tatwood@adoptioncouncil.org. Thank you again for your leadership in this vital matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas C. Atwood". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Thomas C. Atwood
President and CEO