

113TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. RES. 456

Recognizing National Foster Care Month as an opportunity to raise awareness about the challenges of children in the foster care system, and encouraging Congress to implement policy to improve the lives of children in the foster care system.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 22, 2014

Ms. LANDRIEU (for herself, Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. BLUNT, Mr. CASEY, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. CRAPO, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mrs. HAGAN, Ms. HEITKAMP, Mr. HOEVEN, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. JOHANNIS, Mr. KAINE, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. LEVIN, Mr. WYDEN, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, and Mrs. BOXER) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to

RESOLUTION

Recognizing National Foster Care Month as an opportunity to raise awareness about the challenges of children in the foster care system, and encouraging Congress to implement policy to improve the lives of children in the foster care system.

Whereas National Foster Care Month was established more than 20 years ago to—

- (1) bring foster care issues to the forefront;
- (2) highlight the importance of permanency for every child; and

(3) recognize the essential role that foster parents, social workers, and advocates have in the lives of children in foster care throughout the United States;

Whereas all children deserve a safe, loving, and permanent home;

Whereas the primary goal of the foster care system is to ensure the safety and well-being of children while working to provide a safe, loving, and permanent home for each child;

Whereas there are approximately 400,000 children living in foster care;

Whereas there were approximately 252,000 youth that entered the foster care system in 2012, while nearly 102,000 youth were eligible and awaiting adoption at the end of 2012;

Whereas foster care is intended to be a temporary placement, but children remain in the foster care system for an average of 2 years;

Whereas ethnic minority children are more likely to stay in the foster care system for longer periods of time and are less likely to be reunited with their biological families;

Whereas foster parents are the front-line caregivers for children who cannot safely remain with their biological parents and provide physical care, emotional support, education advocacy, and are the largest single source of families providing permanent homes for children leaving foster care to adoption;

Whereas children in foster care who are placed with relatives, compared to children placed with nonrelatives, have more stability, including fewer changes in placements, have more positive perceptions of their placements, are more

likely to be placed with their siblings, and demonstrate fewer behavioral problems;

Whereas some relative caregivers receive less financial assistance and support services than do foster caregivers;

Whereas recent studies show children in foster care are prescribed psychotropic medication at rates up to 11 times higher than other children on Medicaid and in amounts that exceed the Food and Drug Administration's guidelines;

Whereas youth in foster care are much more likely to face educational instability with 34 percent of foster youth ages 17 to 18 experiencing at least 5 changes while in care;

Whereas youth in foster care are often cut off from other youth and face hurdles in participating in activities common to their peers, such as sports or extracurricular activities;

Whereas youth in foster care are more susceptible to being trafficked, and more needs to be done to prevent, identify, and intervene when a child becomes a victim of the crime;

Whereas an increased emphasis on prevention and reunification services is necessary to reduce the number of children that are forced to remain in the foster care system;

Whereas more than 23,400 youth "age out" of foster care annually without a legal permanent connection to an adult or family;

Whereas children who age out of foster care lack the security or support of a biological or adoptive family and frequently struggle to secure affordable housing, obtain

health insurance, pursue higher education, and acquire adequate employment;

Whereas nearly half of children in foster care for five or more years experience 7 or more different foster care placements, which often leads to disruption of routines and the need to change schools and move away from siblings, extended families, and familiar surroundings;

Whereas children entering foster care often confront the widespread misperception that children in foster care are disruptive, unruly, and dangerous, even though placement in foster care is based on the actions of a parent or guardian, not the child;

Whereas States, localities, and communities should be encouraged to invest resources in preventative and reunification services and post-permanency programs to ensure that more children in foster care are provided with safe, loving, and permanent placements;

Whereas Federal legislation over the past three decades, including the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 (Public Law 96–272), the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (Public Law 105–89), the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (Public Law 110–351), the Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act (Public Law 112–34), and the Uninterrupted Scholars Act (Public Law 112-278) provided new investments and services to improve the outcomes of children in the foster care system;

Whereas the Children’s Bureau of the Department of Health and Human Services has designated May as National Foster Care Month under the theme “to help build blocks toward permanent families for foster youth”;

Whereas May would be an appropriate month to designate as National Foster Care Month to provide an opportunity to acknowledge the accomplishments of the child-welfare workforce, foster parents, advocacy community, and mentors for their dedication, accomplishments, and positive impact they have on the lives of children; and

Whereas much remains to be done to ensure that all children have a safe, loving, nurturing, and permanent family, regardless of age or special needs: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) recognizes National Foster Care Month as
3 an opportunity to raise awareness about the chal-
4 lenges that children face in the foster-care system;

5 (2) encourages Congress to implement policy to
6 improve the lives of children in the foster care sys-
7 tem and maximize the number children exiting foster
8 care to the protection of safe, loving, and permanent
9 families;

10 (3) supports the designation of National Foster
11 Care Month;

12 (4) acknowledges the unique needs of children
13 in the foster-care system;

14 (5) recognizes foster youth throughout the
15 United States for their ongoing tenacity, courage,
16 and resilience while facing life challenges;

1 (6) acknowledges the exceptional alumni of the
2 foster-care system who serve as advocates and role
3 models for youth who remain in care;

4 (7) honors the commitment and dedication of
5 the individuals who work tirelessly to provide assist-
6 ance and services to children in the foster-care sys-
7 tem; and

8 (8) reaffirms the need to continue working to
9 improve the outcomes of all children in the foster-
10 care system through parts B and E of title IV of the
11 Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) and
12 other programs designed to—

13 (A) support vulnerable families;

14 (B) invest in prevention and reunification
15 services;

16 (C) promote guardianship, adoption, and
17 other permanent placement opportunities in
18 cases where reunification is not in the best in-
19 terests of the child;

20 (D) adequately serve those children
21 brought into the foster-care system; and

22 (E) facilitate the successful transition into
23 adulthood for children that “age out” of the
24 foster-care system.

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