



April 20, 2017

The Honorable Jared Huffman
U.S. House of Representatives
1406 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Huffman:

I am writing on behalf of First Focus Campaign for Children, a bipartisan children's advocacy organization dedicated to making children and families a priority in federal budget and policy decisions, to thank you for your leadership in introducing the National Adoption and Foster Care Home Study Act (H.R. 1650).

There are approximately 112,000 children in foster care waiting to be adopted. This is the highest number of children waiting to be adopted since 2009.¹ According to a recent report by the National Council for Adoption (NCFCA), in 2015 the number of children who were adopted from foster care increased by 5.8%. However, the number of children waiting to be adopted also increased due to an increase in the overall numbers of children being placed into foster care.

Currently, there are no national home study standards. Individual states and/jurisdictions have their own processes for screening and approving prospective adoption and foster families. Because of the variance in standards there is often mistrust between the jurisdictions, and this has been a limitation for interstate adoptions.² National standards for eligibility and approval will help to provide a more safe and structured environment for children. These standards will also work to reduce the number of children waiting for foster care and/or adoption.

The National Adoption and Foster Care Home Study Act would direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services to create a national home study standard and database within the Adoption Opportunities Program. This would allow foster care and adoption agencies to access a uniform system and provide more efficient pairing of children to families. In addition, this bill would also increase transparency of prospective foster and adoptive parents by establishing a comprehensive home study assessment process. This act would also direct the Secretary to provide grants and incentives to States and Tribes to implement these programs.

By improving adoption standards and reducing the number of children waiting for prospective families this legislation would help to provide a more permanent and stable environment for children in the foster care system.

¹ "New Foster Care Statistics: What You Should Know." *National Council for Adoption*. N.p., 28 Oct. 2016. Web. 18 Apr. 2017.

² "Eliminating Barriers to the Adoption of Children in Foster Care: Faculty Research Working Paper Series." *Harvard Kennedy School*. Sept. 2012.

We are grateful for your leadership in making children and families a legislative priority, and we look forward to working with you on this and other proposals to improve the well-being of America's children and youth. Should you have any questions about this letter, please contact Richa Mathur at rricham@firstfocus.org.

Sincerely,

Bruce Lesley