

THE DONALDSON ADOPTION INSTITUTE

July 22, 2014

Honorable Ron Wyden
Chairman, Senate Finance Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Honorable Orrin Hatch
Ranking Member, Senate Finance Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Honorable Dave Camp
Chairman, Ways and Means Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Honorable Sander Levin
Ranking Member, Ways and Means Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Camp, Ranking Member Levin, Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Hatch:

[The Donaldson Adoption Institute](#) (DAI) is extremely grateful to the Ways and Means and Senate Finance Committees for their dedication to drafting the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act (HR4980) to not only encourage adoptions from care of children who cannot return to their biological families, but also to ensure those adoptive families remain stable. We appreciate the Committees' bipartisan efforts, solicitation of expert testimony, and consideration of comments in developing this legislation. We are delighted that HR4980 would improve the adoption and guardianship incentive award structure; require states to calculate and report on savings from the Fostering Connections adoption assistance/AFDC de-link; mandate that states spend twenty percent of savings on post-adoption and post-guardianship services; and require states to collect data on disruption and dissolution. DAI also supports the provisions to protect children and youth at risk of sex trafficking; extend the Family Connection Grant Program; and limit the use of Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement. DAI respectfully encourages House and Senate consideration and passage of the bill before the August recess.

The Adoption Institute is an independent, nonpartisan policy and education nonprofit that conducts research and analysis in order to improve adoption-related laws, policies and practices for first/birth families, adoptive families and adopted people. One of DAI's primary objectives is to make certain that children and youth in temporary care who are legally free for adoption move expeditiously from foster care into permanent, loving, successful families. Our nationwide "Keeping the Promise" initiative, for instance, aims to expand an essential tool for achieving this goal: adoption support and preservation (ASAP) services.

Recent DAI research shows that more than one-third of states have cut ASAP or adoption subsidy funding in the last 10 years and only three states have statutes requiring ASAP. At the same time, research shows the need for and benefit of ASAP services in promoting and sustaining adoptions:

- According to the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption 2013 [National Foster Care Adoption Attitudes Survey](#), "those who have considered foster care adoption, and those who have not, see financial-support-related steps as making the biggest difference in the decision to adopt." Of those who have considered it, from two-thirds (66%) to nearly 85

percent (83%) said that various post-adoption services and supports were “difference-makers” in decisions regarding foster care adoption.

- Research indicates that the amount and quality of support child welfare adoptive families receive contributes to family permanency and positive adjustment.
- A longitudinal study on the contribution of supportive resources to the well-being of special needs adoptive families found that those who received more services prior to finalization were more stable and experienced less conflict three years later.

DAI is grateful for your leadership and commitment to the over 100,000 children still waiting in temporary care for permanent families. The numbers remind us of the work that remains to be done to fulfill our obligations to these children; the Adoption and Legal Guardianship Incentive Payments provisions offer promising policies to do so. DAI looks forward to working with states to strengthen post-adoption services for families through implementation of HR4980. Please feel free to contact me if you would like additional information.



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cc: Honorable Dave Reichert, Honorable Lloyd Doggett