



April 22, 2009

The Honorable John M. Spratt
Chairman, Budget Committee
United States House of Representatives
1401 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Ranking Member, Budget Committee
United States House of Representatives
1113 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Spratt and Ranking Member Ryan:

The Child Welfare League of America (CWLA), on behalf of public and private child-serving agencies nationwide, writes in support of the Fiscal Year 2010 Budget Resolution that incorporates key priorities of President Obama's proposed budget. Of critical importance to CWLA is the need to address health care reform, the need to adequately fund programs that can prevent and remedy child abuse and neglect and the need to support legislative efforts to continue the reform of the child welfare system.

CWLA agrees with the Administration that to restore the economy and address future deficits, we must reduce or eliminate wasteful health care spending, improve health care quality, and expand coverage to the 46 million Americans who now lack health insurance, particularly our nation's uninsured children and youth. In line with this, CWLA offers our support for a reserve fund and the needed flexibility to address comprehensive health reform in this year.

As House and Senate conferees negotiate the differences between the Senate budget resolution (S. Con. Res. 13) and the House budget resolution (H. Con. Res. 85), CWLA urges conferees to recede to the House resolution language as it applies to discretionary spending. It is critical that we make important investments in vital human services such as child care, education, preventing child abuse and many other priority areas. While it will be challenging to address these and many other critical issues even under the House resolution, the proposed levels in H. Con Res. 85 will provide needed resources.

CWLA asks conferees to recede to the Senate and include in a final resolution two reserve funds that address child welfare and in particular children who are in foster care and special needs adoptions. In an earlier letter, CWLA offered its recommendations regarding an important reserve fund that will advance the Administration's proposal on home visitation programs. This will help advance prevention efforts. The reserve funds proposed by Senator Landrieu, Senator Grassley and Senator Lincoln will allow Congress to enact critical reforms that can assist the nearly 800,000 children who spend time in foster care over the course of the year. We commend the Congress for their bold leadership in 2008 in enacting the Fostering Connections to Success Act (PL 110-351). We hope that Congress will now build on that historic legislation and take the first step in that direction by including these reserve funds.

CWLA supports the broad outlines of these resolutions and with these improvements Congress can take important steps in building a stronger future for America's children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christine James-Brown". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Christine James-Brown
President/CEO