

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 24, 2009

The Honorable Harry Reid
Senate Majority Leader
S-221 Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Leader Reid:

As we approach a historic House-Senate conference committee on health care reform, we urge you to include therapeutic foster care through the Medicaid program in the final conference agreement.



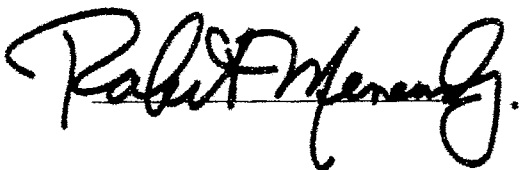
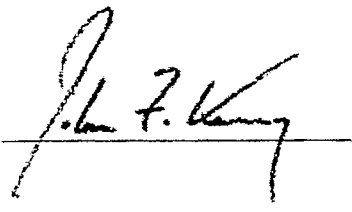
Youth in child welfare are some of the most vulnerable children anywhere in American society. Recent estimates show the fully 80% of these young people have diagnosable mental disorders. Therapeutic foster care is considered the least restrictive form of out-of-home therapeutic placement for children with severe emotional disorders. Care is delivered in private homes with specially trained foster parents who, in turn, receive support from public social services and mental health agencies.

This cost effective, evidenced-based intervention helps up to 50,000 children annually with serious mental and emotional disturbances live in the community rather than in high cost residential treatment facilitates and psychiatric hospitals.

Therapeutic foster care was recognized as an evidenced-based practice in Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General of the United States as far back as 1999. More recently, the provision we are seeking was included in health care reform legislation approved by Senate Finance Committee (Sec. 1641 of S. 1796) and remains in the America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009 (Section 1727 of H.R. 3200).

Including these same provisions in the final conference report will advance evidenced-based practices and help low income children in desperate need of effective services. Thank you for you attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Bob Carey, Jr. Mark R. Warner

Paul Begala

Ron Wyden

Marty Anderson

Al Franken

