



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Opening Statement of Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.)
At the Committee Markup of The Child and Family Services
Improvement and Innovation Act and Four Nominations
As prepared for delivery

We begin today with the Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act.

The Nobel Prize-winning poet Gabriela Mistral wrote, "Many things can wait; the child cannot. To him we cannot say tomorrow; his name is today."

Today we consider legislation for children that cannot wait. The Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program expires in ten days. This Committee must act now.

Fortunately, child welfare programs have long had a tradition of bipartisanship in the Finance Committee. Today we continue that proud tradition. The legislation before us is both bipartisan and bicameral.

In a time when many have lost faith in Congress' ability to work together and find solutions for the greater good, it is heartening to see that this Committee has led an effort to not only reach across the aisle, but to also reach across Chambers to find solutions.

This legislation will help change the lives of America's most vulnerable children. Children who have suffered or who are at risk of child abuse and neglect.

One such child, Schylar Canfield, would have benefited from many of the improvements in the legislation before us today. Schylar entered foster care when he was six years old. During his time in the system, he lived in 14 different homes.

Schylar was finally adopted at the age of 26, showing that a permanent family is always possible. Now a grown man, he holds a Master's Degree from the University of Montana. Schylar's resilience and courage is admirable, but typical of the kind of struggle our kids in the foster care system face every day.

The legislation we consider today reauthorizes the Promoting Safe and Stable Families program through 2016 at current funding levels. It also reauthorizes the Court Improvement Program through 2016. This will help judges better understand and handle child welfare proceedings, making them better able to help families and kids in need.

The legislation continues our commitment to support case workers, and it ensures that children and families receive attention through case worker visits.

This legislation also asks that states better serve children by requiring improvements in several areas including: addressing the developmental needs of young children; minimizing emotional trauma; and targeting services to those most at risk of maltreatment.

We also ensure that foster youth remain in the same school whenever possible. And this legislation calls for the better use of data to improve program integrity. It also continues the Regional Grant Program to improve outcomes for children whose parents suffer from substance abuse addiction.

In addition, the legislation reauthorizes HHS' authority to issue up to 30 child welfare waivers. These waivers present states with the opportunity to innovate, and they do so while laying a strong foundation for comprehensive reform of the child welfare system.

As we aspire to comprehensive reform, I will need to call on my colleagues here to continue your good work on this issue. The Finance Committee has several leaders on child welfare issues including Ranking Member Hatch and Senators Rockefeller and Grassley who have long been partners with me on these efforts. And several members have introduced legislation on these issues including Senators Kerry, Enzi and Wyden. I look forward to working with all of you as we move forward.

Today, we will also consider four nominees pending before this Committee.

Juan Vasquez, Maurice Foley, and Joseph Gale have been nominated to serve second 15-year terms on the U.S. Tax Court. In this capacity, they will help ensure the fair administration of our tax laws.

Janice Eberly has been nominated to be the Assistant Secretary of Treasury for Economic Policy. She will help determine the economic effects of policies considered and implemented by the Treasury Department.

These nominees will fulfill important positions that affect the daily lives of millions of Americans.

So let us act quickly to confirm these nominees, and let us act to improve the lives of some of our most vulnerable children. Let us not wait until tomorrow. Let us act today.

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