



**RESOLUTION ON REFORM OF FEDERAL FOSTER CARE FINANCING:
FAMILIES FOR ALL**

WHEREAS, Every child needs to be protected from abuse and neglect and deserves to be reared in a loving, safe, stable environment with families that nurture, protect, and guide them; and

WHEREAS, Foster care should be a temporary, short-term placement for children until they can achieve permanency through family reunification, adoption, or guardianship. However, the 513,000 children in foster care in the United States have been in foster care for an average of 2 years, 5 months, and the 114,000 children waiting to be adopted have been in foster care for an average of 3 years, 6 months—while a record 24,000 children aged out of the foster care system during the last year for which statistics are available without being placed with a loving, permanent family; and

WHEREAS, The federal government shares the responsibility with states to protect children from abuse and neglect and to secure safe, permanent homes for them. However, the current federal financing structure for foster care encourages an over-reliance on placement and maintenance of children in foster care with insufficient resources for other services that keep families together or move such children quickly into a new adoptive family or guardianship when reunification is not possible; and

WHEREAS, Sixty-one percent of all federal financing allocated to states for child welfare purposes is mandated according to Title IV-E of the Social Security Act to be used for maintaining children in foster care, and for related administrative and training costs, thereby limiting states' resources for other important services, such as prevention and rehabilitation services, adoptive and foster parent recruitment, and post-placement services for adoptive and foster families; and

WHEREAS, The current rigid federal financial structure for foster care harms children by causing them to be maintained in foster care, when greater flexibility would enable states to provide permanency for them more quickly through reunification, adoption, or guardianship; and

WHEREAS, A recent survey shows that 61 percent of respondents agree that “federal policy should allow states the flexibility to spend more of their federal foster care dollars on adoptive and foster parent recruitment and on post-placement services for adoptive and foster families;” and

WHEREAS, The same survey also shows that 61 percent of respondents agree that “federal policy should allow states the flexibility to spend more of their federal foster care dollars on prevention and rehabilitation services;” and

WHEREAS, The federal government mandates that states protect all children from abuse and neglect and provide assistance for such children while they are in the care of the state, regardless of income. However, the federal government only provides assistance to states for children whose birthparents meet the 1996 income eligibility requirements for Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC); and

WHEREAS, The outdated income eligibility requirements means 5,100 fewer children are eligible for federal financial assistance each year, shifting the burden to the states and limiting states' resources for other important child welfare services; and

WHEREAS, The same survey shows that 65 percent of respondents agree that "all children who are victims of abuse or neglect should be eligible for federal foster care funding, regardless of income." However, in 2004, only 47 percent of neglected and abused children in foster care were eligible to receive federal support, causing the states to miss out on an estimated \$1.9 billion dollars in federal reimbursements for foster care support; and

WHEREAS, The United States Congress plays a vital role and has a unique opportunity to reform the federal financial system for foster care giving states more flexibility to use their federal dollars towards other important services, such as prevention and rehabilitation services, adoptive and foster parent recruitment, and post-placement services for adoptive and foster families.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the {insert state legislative body} urges the United States Congress to act quickly to reform the current federal financial structure for foster care (most particularly, Title IV-E of the Social Security Act) to allow states the flexibility to use more of their federal financing for other effective child welfare services besides foster care maintenance; and to provide federal foster care funding for all children, who are victims of neglect or abuse, regardless of income.