
Senate Joint Memorial 8025

State of Washington

60th Legislature

2008 Regular Session

By Senators Stevens, Hargrove, and Parlette

1 TO THE HONORABLE GEORGE W. BUSH, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,
2 AND TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE AND THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF
3 REPRESENTATIVES, AND TO THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
4 UNITED STATES, IN CONGRESS ASSEMBLED:

5 We, your Memorialists, the Senate and House of Representatives of
6 the State of Washington, in legislative session assembled, respectfully
7 represent and petition as follows:

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

11 WHEREAS, Foster care should be a temporary, short-term placement
12 for children until they can achieve permanency through family
13 reunification, adoption, or guardianship. However, the five hundred
14 thirteen thousand children in foster care in the United States have
15 been in foster care for an average of two years, five months, and the
16 one hundred fourteen thousand children waiting to be adopted have been
17 in foster care for an average of three years, six months -- while a
18 record twenty-four thousand children aged out of the foster care system
19 during the last year for which statistics are available without being
20 placed with a loving, permanent family; and

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

9 WHEREAS, Sixty-one percent of all federal financing allocated to
10 states for child welfare purposes is mandated according to Title IV-E
11 of the social security act to be used for maintaining children in
12 foster care, and for related administrative and training costs, thereby
13 limiting states' resources for other important services, such as
14 prevention and rehabilitation services, adoptive and foster parent
15 recruitment, and postplacement services for adoptive and foster
16 families; and

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

21 WHEREAS, A recent survey shows that sixty-one percent of
22 respondents agree that "federal policy should allow states the
23 flexibility to spend more of their federal foster care dollars on
24 adoptive and foster parent recruitment and on postplacement services
25 for adoptive and foster families"; and

26 WHEREAS, The same survey also shows that sixty-one percent of
27 respondents agree that "federal policy should allow states the
28 flexibility to spend more of their federal foster care dollars on
29 prevention and rehabilitation services"; and

30 WHEREAS, The federal government mandates that states protect all
31 children from abuse and neglect and provide assistance for such
32 children while they are in the care of the state, regardless of income.
33 However, the federal government only provides assistance to states for
34 children whose birthparents meet the 1996 income eligibility
35 requirements for aid to families with dependent children; and

36 WHEREAS, The outdated income eligibility requirements means five
37 thousand one hundred fewer children are eligible for federal financial

1 assistance each year, shifting the burden to the states and limiting
2 states' resources for other important child welfare services; and

3 WHEREAS, The same survey shows that sixty-five percent of
4 respondents agree that "all children who are victims of abuse or
5 neglect should be eligible for federal foster care funding, regardless
6 of income." However, in 2004, only forty-seven percent of neglected
7 and abused children in foster care were eligible to receive federal
8 support, causing the states to miss out on an estimated one billion
9 nine hundred million dollars in federal reimbursements for foster care
10 support; and

11 WHEREAS, The United States Congress plays a vital role and has a
12 unique opportunity to reform the federal financial system for foster
13 care giving states more flexibility to use their federal dollars
14 towards other important services, such as prevention and rehabilitation
15 services, adoptive and foster parent recruitment, and postplacement
16 services for adoptive and foster families;

17 NOW, THEREFORE, Your Memorialists respectfully pray that the United
18 States Congress act quickly to reform the current federal financial
19 structure for foster care, most particularly, Title IV-E of the social
20 security act, to allow states the flexibility to use more of their
21 federal financing for other effective child welfare services besides
22 foster care maintenance; and to provide federal foster care funding for
23 all children who are victims of neglect or abuse, regardless of income.

24 BE IT RESOLVED, That copies of this Memorial be immediately
25 transmitted to the Honorable George W. Bush, President of the United
26 States, the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the
27 House of Representatives, and each member of Congress from the State of
28 Washington.

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