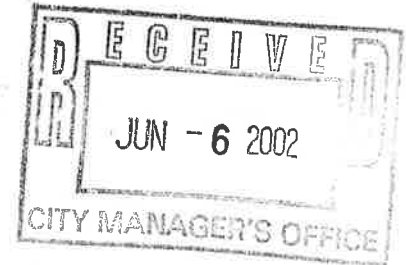


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**Community Coalition Against Poverty
c/o Elizabeth McCulloch
P.O. Box 117629
Gainesville, Florida 32611
352 392 2237 352 374 8940
mcculloch@law.ufl.edu**



To: Wayne Bowers and City Commission
From: Community Coalition Against Poverty
Re: Act to Leave No Child Behind

Date June 3, 2002

The Community Coalition Against Poverty (CCAP) is an unincorporated group of socially concerned individuals working to eliminate poverty by calling citizens and government to account for the common welfare through program monitoring, community education, and advocacy for the poor. Active in Gainesville since 1995, we monitor legislation and contact legislators, hold community workshops, and monitor and advocate at meetings of the Regional Workforce Board. Now we are asking the Gainesville City Commission to support the Act to Leave No Child Behind, by asking our federal Senators and Representatives to sign on as co-sponsors of this legislation. We ask that you provide us approximately fifteen minutes on a City Commission meeting agenda in the near future to present this information and our request to the Commission.

The Act to Leave No Child Behind is a package of federal bills which will provide resources to state and local communities to support children and their families. The Act was introduced in Congress on May 23, 2001 by Senator Christopher Dodd and Representative George Miller. Organizations leading the campaign to see this law enacted include AARP, AFSCME, Children's Defense Fund, Child Welfare League, National Council of Churches of Christ, National Council of Jewish Women, The United Methodist Church, National Urban League, and many others. At its May 18 meeting, the Alachua County Commission voted unanimously to communicate with our federal Senators and Representatives asking that they sign on as co-sponsors of this legislation.

This packet includes: a one-page summary of the Act's provisions, information about the potential impact on Florida, a CCAP brochure about Alachua County's poor children, and more detailed information about the Act. More background materials are available from Elizabeth McCulloch or at the following website: www.childrensdefense.org.

The Act to Leave No Child Behind

- ▶ Creates a health insurance program for children. Combined with existing programs will provide comprehensive benefits for nearly every child. Makes insurance available to parents.
- ▶ Helps communities reduce environmental health risks.
- ▶ Provides funds for parenting education, and other help for parents.
- ▶ Expands the Family and Medical Leave Act.
- ▶ Expands funding for childcare, Head Start and other early childhood programs.
- ▶ Provides funding for reducing class size in elementary schools, teacher education, school facilities. Requires a number of measures to increase accountability.
- ▶ Provides tax relief to low-income families by increasing the child tax credit, the dependent care tax credit, and the earned income tax credit.
- ▶ Improves supports for low-wage workers, such as education, training, and placement, increases the minimum wage, expands transportation subsidies, and makes the reduction of poverty an explicit goal of the federal welfare reform program (TANF).
- ▶ Expands food stamp eligibility and benefits, and meal subsidies to after-school programs.
- ▶ Funds construction and preservation of affordable housing, and provides a million new housing subsidy vouchers over ten years for low income families.
- ▶ Provide more support to prevent removal of children from their families, and to help if they are removed, as well as increasing accountability of child protection systems and training for workers.
- ▶ Increases support for after-school and youth employment programs.
- ▶ Funds delinquency prevention programs, adds additional protection and services for juvenile offenders.
- ▶ Extends regulation of gun sales to gun shows, raises the age for gun ownership, requires trigger locks on handguns, limits frequency of handgun purchases, and requires states to enact laws to prevent children's access to guns.



Children's Defense Fund

THE ACT TO LEAVE NO CHILD BEHIND HELPING CHILDREN IN FLORIDA

July 1, 2001

There are 3,569,878 children under 18 living in Florida, accounting for roughly 23.6 percent of the state's population.¹ **WE CAN DO MORE FOR THESE CHILDREN.**

A HEALTHY START FOR FLORIDA'S CHILDREN

Tragically, 885,000 children in Florida are uninsured² – although they are no less likely to get sick, they are far less likely to see a doctor. Only 80.3 percent of Florida's two-year-olds are up-to-date with their immunizations.³ Approximately 23 percent of high school students in Florida smoke and 68,000 children become new daily smokers each year.⁴

The Act to Leave No Child Behind will help give Florida's children a healthy start. If enacted, **nearly all of Florida's children will be eligible for health coverage** and will no longer have to forego medical care because of an inability to pay. Expanded immunization coverage would help fully immunize all of Florida's children. Further, smoking cessation and prevention programs supported by the bill will help reduce the number of young smokers.

A HEAD START FOR FLORIDA'S CHILDREN

Too few of Florida's children receive the early childhood development and quality care they need to enter school ready to learn. Too many go to schools that are not equipped to teach them adequately. Child care costs for a four-year-old in an urban area child care center in Florida averaged \$4,255 per year – more than the cost of public college tuition in the state – thus making child care unaffordable for most low- and moderate-income families.⁵ Although 32,389 children in Florida were served by Head Start last year,⁶ this number is only a portion of those eligible for these important services. Children also cannot effectively learn in classrooms that are run-down, overcrowded, or have obsolete equipment or supplies. Yet, 81 percent of reading classes in Florida have more than 20 students, and 77 percent of 4th graders read below the proficient level.⁷

The Act to Leave No Child Behind will help give children in Florida a head start. Once the Act is enacted and fully implemented, Florida will receive an additional \$1.6 billion in child care funding, and **approximately 261,000 more children could get assistance for quality child care.** Under the Act, Florida will also receive an additional \$653 million for Head Start programs and **approximately 35,000 more children could participate in Head Start.** Further, under the Act, Florida will be able to issue approximately \$1.2 billion in new school modernization and construction bonds and about **\$30 million for class size reduction, resulting in 1,340 new teachers.**

A FAIR START FOR FLORIDA'S CHILDREN

An estimated 21.8 percent, or 775,812 children in Florida live in poverty.⁸ Poor children suffer needlessly from hunger, stunted growth, substandard housing, and disruptions to their learning – and they do not always get the services that would help. In 1999, for example, 425,329 children in Florida received food stamps⁹ – but approximately 235,000 eligible children did not.¹⁰ In 1990, there were 282,553 low-income households paying 50 percent or more of their income for rent.¹¹

The Act to Leave No Child Behind will help give Florida's children a fair start. If the child tax credit is made fully refundable for all families as proposed by the Act, then an additional 347,265 children in Florida will be eligible to get the credit.¹² Under the Act, more families will receive food stamps, more children will participate in school or child care based food programs, and ultimately, fewer Florida children will go hungry. Under the bill, 52,333 Florida families could receive new Section 8 housing vouchers.

A SAFE START FOR FLORIDA'S CHILDREN

Tragically, children are hurt or killed in Florida every year. In 1998, 82,119 Florida children were victims of abuse or neglect.¹³ There were 154 children killed by firearms in Florida in 1999.¹⁴ And, there were 5,975 children in the state's juvenile delinquency system as of 1997.¹⁵

The Act to Leave No Child Behind will help give Florida's children a safe start. Over the next five years, **Florida will receive \$291 million under the Act in additional funding (through the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program) to enhance preventive services for families in crisis, as well as family reunification and adoption promotion services.** Also, under the Act, Florida will receive **more than \$84 million over five years to help families struggling with alcohol or drug abuse problems that bring them to the attention of the state's child welfare agency.** In order to ensure safety and permanent homes for these children, these families must receive appropriate and timely treatment services. Under the Act, over the next five years Florida also could receive **\$46 million in increased funding for juvenile delinquency prevention programs and \$53 million in increased funding to help improve the state's juvenile justice system.** Further, the Act's gun safety provisions could help reduce the number of these tragic gun deaths.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, *Population Estimates 1999* (available at www.census.gov).

² U.S. Census Bureau: March 1998, 1999 and 2000 Current *Population Surveys and Population Estimates from the U.S. and States by Single Year of Age and Sex* (Washington, D.C. 2000) (adjusted with the 1990 Net Population Adjustment Matrix, released November 1996).

³ Estimated vaccination coverage with the 4:3:1:3 series (1999). Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 1999 National Immunization Survey, MMWR:49(26) (July 7, 2000).

⁴ Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids (Washington, D.C.) (available on their website www.tobaccofreekids.org).

⁵ Karen Schulman, *"The High Cost of Child Care Puts Quality Care Out of Reach for Many Families"* (Washington, D.C.: Children's Defense Fund 2000).

⁶ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Head Start Bureau, *Head Start Enrollment and Race and Ethnicity of Enrollees* (Washington, D.C. 2000).

⁷ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *NAEP1998 Reading: Report Card for the Nation and the States* (March 1999).

⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, *Small Area Poverty Estimates* (available at www.census.org).

⁹ U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Characteristics of Food Stamp Households: Fiscal Year 1999*.

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Reaching Those in Need* (2000) (calculations by Children's Defense Fund).

¹¹ 1990 U.S. Census, CHAS dataset.

¹² Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy tax simulation. Calculations by the Children's Defense Fund.

¹³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, *Child Maltreatment 1998: Reports from the States to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System* (Washington, D.C. 2000).

¹⁴ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center for Health Statistics, unpublished tabulations, Table III: Deaths from 282 Selected Causes (calculations by Children's Defense Fund).

¹⁵ U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Programs, *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1999 National Report* (Washington, D.C. 1999).

If you want to share your opinion about the state of Alachua County's children, you can write to any or all of the following:

Sen. Rod Smith

2727 NW 43rd Street, Suite 2A
Gainesville, Florida 32606
352/375-3555
smith.rod.web@leg.state.fl.us

Rep. Perry McGriff

1120 NW 13th Street; PO Box 1209
Gainesville, Florida 32602-1209
352/334-3820; fax 352/334-3822
mcgriff.perry@leg.state.fl.us

Ed Jennings, Jr.

1220 NE 8th Avenue, Suite A; PO Box 5546
Gainesville, Florida 32627-5546
352/955-6232
jennings.ed@leg.state.fl.us

For more information about how to get involved and advocate for our children, contact

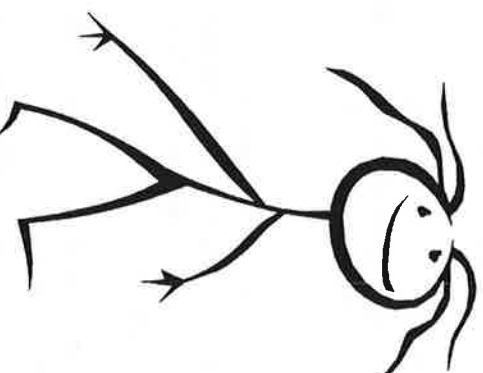
Mary Beth Sullivan, from the

Community Coalition Against Poverty
352/337-9274

Tallahassee's Legislative Information Division can be reached at
1-800-342-1827

For information about voting and the electoral process, contact the
League of Women Voters Alachua County
PO Box 15285
Gainesville, Florida 32604
352/375-6960

ALACHUA COUNTY'S CHILDREN Some Facts You Should Know



Most of the facts included here are taken from the
2000-2001 Community Assessment:
School Board of Alachua County
Head Start/Pre-Kindergarten Programs
Prepared by Richard H. Schneider, Ph.D., AICP
And Paul D. Zwick, Ph.D.
May, 2001

The **poverty rates** for children are significantly higher in Alachua County than at state or national levels:

- ✓ 23% of children under 18 live below 100% of the poverty level (income below \$14,630 for a family of 3).
- ✓ 38% of children birth to 4 live below 150% of poverty level (\$21,945 for a family of 3)

Half of all children born in Alachua County every year are born into poverty (below 100% of the poverty level).

About 1,753 families a month receive **AFDC** (now called **TANF**). **Children make up 74% of the recipients.**

WAGES is the program that helps people leave welfare for work. According to the *Agency for Workforce Innovation*, and the Florida *Department of Children & Families*, in **Alachua-Bradford in 3 months in 1996, WAGES clients' average earnings were \$3,627; in 2001 they were \$1,280.** In 1996, 36% of WAGES clients were in part-time jobs; in 2001 89% were working part-time.

Top pay for WAGES clients in Alachua County in 2000 averaged **\$5.88 an hour.** (This is significantly lower than the \$6.28/hour pay received by WAGES clients statewide.)

The number of children **"at risk"** (abused, neglected, in danger) receiving child care has **nearly doubled** in the last three years.

There is **insufficient affordable housing** to meet the needs of low income residents. This situation is not expected to change in the near future. According to the *Gainesville/Alachua County 1997 Continuum of Care for the Homeless Report*, on any given night in Gainesville, there are **809 homeless people; 32% of them are families with children.**

The total number of subsidized child care slots needed in Alachua County has increased 21% since 1997-1998. In January 2002, there were **476 children on the waiting list for child care.**

According to the Gainesville Sun from 1/10/02, Alachua County's Association for Retarded Citizens, serving 400 children and adults with developmental disabilities, cut back on staff and programs because of budget problems. Fifteen positions were eliminated; **half the cuts were in the developmental day-care program for children from birth to three years.**

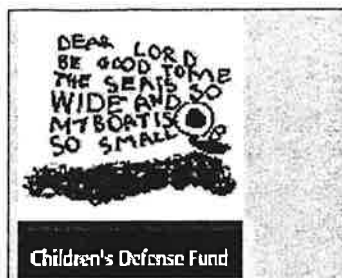
The most recent community assessment of Alachua county notes an undeniable trend in Alachua County toward a **steady increase** in the numbers of **very young children with disabilities.**

Nearly 56% of Head Start children live within one mile of a **hazardous waste site**; nearly 25% of Head Start children live within two miles of the County's only EPA **Superfund site.** About 22% of Head Start children live on land where **active radon** mitigation efforts are recommended.

Children in Alachua County tend not to be as well off as children living elsewhere in Florida. The following offer the range of indicators: Among all 67 counties in Florida, Alachua County ranks:

- ✓ 3rd in percentage of unwed mothers relative to all teenage births in 1999
- ✓ 5th for babies weighing less than 1,500 grams at birth, and is much higher in the percentage of babies weighing less than 2,500 grams that the State of Florida generally.
- ✓ 26th relative to the provision of prenatal care only in the 3rd trimester or none at all
- ✓ Among the top ten counties relative to child deaths
- ✓ Within the top third among counties in reported maltreatment cases





Summary of the Act to Leave No Child Behind

July 1, 2001

The Act to Leave No Child Behind (S. 940/H.R. 1990) is comprehensive legislation for America's children introduced on May 23, 2001 by Senator Christopher Dodd of Connecticut and Representative George Miller of California.

Title I. Every Child Needs a Healthy Start

Problem: In America today, nearly 11 million children have no health insurance. Over 6 million of them are eligible for Medicaid or the state Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Children who lack health insurance are no less likely to get sick, but are far less likely to see a doctor. A child who can't see the blackboard clearly or hear a teacher during a lesson plan has a greater chance of falling behind his peers -- some may never catch up. Uninsured families typically cannot afford the routine and preventive pediatric care that would protect their children from many serious illnesses. Expensive emergency room treatment often becomes necessary when these families cannot afford routine care for their children. A simple ear infection can turn into a severe problem that could lead to hearing loss. The availability of routine care can help prevent this from happening.

How the Act to Leave No Child Behind Will Help: The Act to Leave No Child Behind will create a new children's health insurance program, similar to Medicare for the elderly, so that, combined with Medicaid, CHIP, and employment based coverage, nearly all families will have guaranteed sources of coverage for their uninsured children. Comprehensive benefits for nearly every child would be available at birth. Barriers to enrollment in children's health insurance programs would be eliminated. Parents would have a broad array of sources for medical care for their children, including strong pediatric protections through strengthened HMOs. New initiatives would be offered for communities to reduce lead poisoning affecting children, assist with asthma management and treatment specifically for children, and aggressive youth smoking cessation and prevention efforts. New initiatives would also be offered to communities to reduce environmental health risks affecting children such as toxic chemicals and pesticides used in areas where children play.

Title II. Parenting -- Supporting Children's Healthy Development

Problem: Raising children to be self-confident, responsible citizens who can achieve their full potential always has been one of the most challenging and demanding jobs any adult can undertake. In many ways, it is much harder now than it has ever been. Parents today are often running in a million different directions as they try to balance the demands of family life and the jobs necessary to try to make ends meet. They worry about spending too little time with their children. At one time, extended families were likely to be available for advice and babysitting. Family doctors, ministers, and rabbis offered parents help with their questions about child rearing. But much has changed today. Many parents are without strong ties to their neighborhoods and with few kin to call on. Most parents want help so that they can better nurture and support their children, help them enter school ready to learn and function well in school and

other settings as they grow older. Parents are eager to get new information and ideas about child development and child rearing and to consult with others when challenges arise.

How the Act to Leave No Child Behind Will Help: The Act to Leave No Child Behind recognizes the help parents need to adequately support their children. It will offer them help in their parenting roles and also respond to their needs for basic supports to enable them to spend time with their children. The bill will promote state and local parenting support and education programs to assist parents of children, young and old, to appropriately care for and respond to their children's needs before problems develop. Community-based parenting support and education resource centers will offer parents ongoing consultation, respite and access to comprehensive services. The bill will also extend health care to uninsured parents whose children are eligible for CHIP and Medicaid and make it possible for more parents to benefit from the Family and Medical Leave Act. There is recognition, too, of the need for help for non-custodial parents so that they can contribute financially, emotionally, and in other positive ways to their children's development.

Title III. Every Child Needs a Head Start

Problem: In too many communities, quality child care and early childhood education is not available or affordable. Parents face long waiting lists for child care assistance and for spaces in child care programs. With 78 percent of mothers of school-age children in the workforce and over half of mothers with infants under one year working today, parents and communities struggle with how best to care for the next generation. Only about 12 percent of children who are eligible for assistance under the Child Care and Development Block Grant receive it. Head Start serves only three out of five eligible children. Research on critical brain development during the first three years of life further strengthens the need for quality early childhood development programs.

How the Act to Leave No Child Behind Will Help: The Act to Leave No Child Behind will expand early childhood development programs, provide access to pre-kindergarten to families who want to participate, fully fund child care, fully fund Head Start for three and four-year-olds, and improve parental access and choice among child care providers. New initiatives will help states and communities better train child care workers, reduce barriers to enrollment in child care, and improve the quality of child care programs.

Education Improvements to Enable All Children to Succeed

Problem: Throughout America, parents and students voice dissatisfaction with today's public schools. Class sizes are too large and too many teachers are not trained for the subjects they are hired to teach. The richest school districts spend 56 percent more per student than do the poorest. Seventy-eight percent of 4th graders, 75 percent of 8th graders, and 79 percent of 12th graders scored below the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) writing proficient level. Over the next decade, 2.2 million new teachers will be needed to replace retiring teachers and those leaving the teaching profession as well as to accommodate population increases and the movement to reduce class-size. Public school system accountability is mediocre at best. A recent Department of Education study found that three-quarters of the nation's schools have construction or modernization needs of more than \$127 billion. About 43 percent of schools listed one environmental problem and approximately 50 percent of schools reported at least one of nine building feature problems.

How the Act to Leave No Child Behind Will Help: The Act to Leave No Child Behind will

provide funding to help local school districts recruit, train, and hire additional teachers to improve the teaching workforce and help to reduce class-size. New incentives will be offered to improve teacher performance, allow student loan forgiveness for aspiring teachers, expand alternative certification procedures to recruit more talented individuals into classrooms, and promote professional development. Accountability for state and local education agencies will be increased with clear performance benchmarks to be set by the states. The bill will include new tax incentives for school construction and modernization as well as direct grant assistance to communities. A new initiative is included to expand books in the homes of low-income families with young children.

Title IV. Tax Relief for Low-Wage Working Families

Problem: Currently, there are limited tax credits available for low-income families. Some provisions are not refundable -- so families with little or no income tax liability do not receive assistance. Other provisions have not been updated in years, in some cases decades, and need to more accurately reflect the costs of raising a child.

How the Act to Leave No Child Behind Will Help: The Act to Leave No Child Behind will increase the current \$500 per child tax credit to \$1,000 per child. The Act will make it refundable for all families with little or no federal income tax liability, an important anti-poverty measure. In addition, the Act will increase the Dependent Care Tax Credit (DCTC) and make it refundable, expand the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) for families with three or more children, and reduce the marriage penalty for families eligible for the EITC.

Title V. Every Child Needs a Fair Start

Problem: Over 12 million children, one out of six, live in poverty in America today. More than three-fourths of all poor children (78 percent) live in working families, including 3.8 million poor children who live in families where at least one person worked full-time year round. Despite persistent stereotypes, more than 3 out of 5 poor children in America are white. Poor children are more likely to be hungry, live in unsafe or overcrowded housing, go to school tired in the winter from sleeping poorly without enough heat, enter school behind their peers, and be at greater risk of abuse and neglect. At the same time, many states have unspent welfare money and unspent tobacco settlement money. It is unconscionable that so many children are poor when we have the means to help them.

How the Act to Leave No Child Behind Will Help: With America's poor children increasingly living in working families, we must provide family work supports such as child care assistance, health care coverage, and transportation assistance to help enable these families to lift their children out of poverty. The Act to Leave No Child Behind will help ensure that low-wage working parents receive the support they need to keep their jobs and pay their bills. The bill requires caseworkers to be trained and knowledgeable about community resources to help families receive the supports for which they are eligible. It encourages states to reduce administrative barriers that prevent families from receiving Food Stamps, Medicaid, and child care assistance. To enable parents to get higher paying jobs, the bill would allow education and training to be counted along with work to meet federal participation requirements; allow parents to combine partial cash assistance with their own earnings for longer periods of time; and allow more child support collections to be passed on directly to the family.

Title VI. Children's Nutrition -- Getting Enough to Eat

Problem: The Department of Agriculture estimates that about 12 million children live in families not getting enough to eat. Among these families, over 3 million children were regularly hungry. A Second Harvest National Food Bank Network 1998 study found nearly 38 percent of emergency food assistance clients were children. More than one in three immigrant families in a 1998 study included children who were experiencing hunger -- forcing them to skip meals, cut the size of meals, or go without food for an entire day due to lack of resources to buy food. Many of these children are U.S. citizens, but they don't receive food stamps or other benefits because their parents are immigrants. A child who is hungry can't concentrate to learn in school. All children need nutritious meals to grow and develop physically, intellectually, and emotionally.

How the Act to Leave No Child Behind Will Help: The Act to Leave No Child Behind will expand the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) to more preschool children and toddlers. It will increase the number of after-school programs providing snacks to youth as well as providing dinner in some cases. The bill will restore food stamp eligibility to legal immigrants, and increase Food Stamps for low-wage families with children, particularly families with high housing costs.

Title VII. Having a Safe, Affordable Place to Live

Problem: Millions of children live in families today who pay more than half their income for rent or live doubled-up in overcrowded or substandard housing. A recent study by the Department of Housing and Urban Development found that a record 4.9 million households have "worst case housing needs." Among this group, working families with children are growing the fastest. At the same time, the amount of affordable housing for low-wage renters continues to decline. Throughout many communities, there are long waiting lists for assistance. Some communities have stopped taking names. Poor families living in the suburbs most frequently face worst case needs.

How the Act to Leave No Child Behind Will Help: The Act to Leave No Child Behind will provide 1 million new Section 8 vouchers over the next 10 years, repair and rehab public housing for families with children, and increase grants to states to expand the supply of affordable housing.

Title VIII. Every Child Needs a Safe Start

Problem: Every day, more than 7,900 children are reported to public child protection agencies as suspected victims of abuse and neglect and referred for investigation or assessment. In 1998, 903,000 children were confirmed as victims of child abuse and neglect. In many states and communities, the child protection system is being stretched to its breaking point without the capacity to respond fully to the complex needs of troubled families. Too often children and parents do not get help and their unmet needs spiral into lifelong problems.

How the Act to Leave No Child Behind Will Help: The Act to Leave No Child Behind will help to ensure that more children are in safe, nurturing, and permanent families. It will extend federal support for services to children and their parents who come to the attention of the child welfare system to help them prevent problems from re-occurring and to help reunify children safely with their families. Extended support also will be provided to ensure that children who must be removed from their families, placed in foster care, and then are returned home, adopted, or placed with kinship care families can remain safely and permanently with those families. Other new initiatives will encourage effective approaches to prevent and treat domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse, and mental health problems in young children that further undermine

the stability of families.

Title IX. Successful Transitions to Adulthood -- Youth Development

Problem: According to the Census Bureau, nearly seven million children are left home alone after school each week. Youth left home alone after school are more likely to engage in risky behaviors such as smoking, drinking, sex, or crime. Violent juvenile crime peaks between the hours of 3:00pm and 7:00pm and teens are more likely to be victims of serious violent crime in the hour after school lets out than any other hour of the day. Access to structured activities and resources not only reduces the likelihood of delinquency, but also ensures positive youth development.

How the Act to Leave No Child Behind Will Help: The Act to Leave No Child Behind will provide increased funding to support after-school and youth development programs. Research has shown that investment in comprehensive after-school programs, can dramatically reduce youth crime and violence. In addition, youth who participate in after-school and youth development programs are less likely to use drugs, drink alcohol, become sexually active or smoke, and are more likely to have stronger interpersonal skills and higher academic achievement. Providing all children with constructive alternatives in and out of school is essential to ensuring that our nation's youth have every opportunity to grow into healthy, productive adults. By increasing our commitment to the positive development of our children, the Act to Leave No Child Behind will help ensure that all children have the opportunity to realize their full potential.

Title X. Every Child Needs a Safe Start -- Juvenile Justice

Problem: While juvenile crime rates have been declining since 1994, states are increasingly treating youthful offenders as adults – subjecting them to adult sentences and adult prison. Contrary to popular perception, the vast majority of children involved in criminal activity commit nonviolent offenses. Less than ten percent of juvenile offenders commit serious violent crime. Most delinquent youth are struggling with social, education, or economic hardships beyond their control. What these young people need is help to make positive choices about their lives and the supports to get back on the right track when they have faltered. A comprehensive approach that includes both prevention and appropriate intervention will help to reduce juvenile delinquency and give these young people the help they need to become productive, law-abiding adults.

How the Act To Leave No Child Behind will help: The Act To Leave No Child Behind will provide increased funding for delinquency prevention programs, create incentives to states to provide sufficient treatment and after-care services for delinquent youth, and prohibit children from being detained with adults under any circumstances. The bill would help to ensure that youthful offenders receive appropriate health, mental health, education, substance abuse and counseling services during their detention period and after their release. The bill would also help states address the disparate treatment of minorities in the juvenile justice system in order to ensure that all juveniles are treated fairly.

Title XI. Every Child Needs a Safe Start -- Gun Safety

Problem: The most recent annual data shows that over 3,700 children and teens are killed by gunfire in the United States -- 10 each day. About 58 percent of young people killed by gunfire are victims of homicide and about one-third of gun-related deaths are the result of children and

teens committing suicide. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the rate of firearm deaths among children under age 15 is almost 12 times higher in the United States than in 25 other industrialized countries combined. Congress must improve gun safety laws as well as support existing programs that enhance enforcement efforts and support responsible gun ownership.

How the Act To Leave No Child Behind will Help: The Act To Leave No Child Behind will close existing loopholes in our nation's gun laws to ensure that only law-abiding citizens can legally purchase a gun. The measure will require mandatory safety locks with the sale of handguns, ban the importation of large capacity ammunition clips capable of firing more than 10 rounds, ban the possession of assault weapons by juveniles, and ban the possession of handguns by individuals under 21 years of age.

Title XII. Every Child Needs the Support of the Entire Community

Problem: Children and families need the support of the entire community, from private employers to local community organizations, to thrive. Private employers, in particular, can play an important role in creating family-friendly workplaces that allow parents to succeed at work and at home.

How the Act To Leave No Child Behind will Help: The Act To Leave No Child Behind will direct the Secretary of HHS to establish a blue-ribbon commission to identify and highlight family-friendly practices that the private sector and employers can promote. In addition, the measure will strengthen national data collection and dissemination activities so that local communities can better assess the needs of children and families.

For more information about the Act to Leave No Child Behind, please contact the Department of Intergovernmental Relations at (202) 662-3576.

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[[cosponsors](#)] [[Latino Children](#)] [[Black Children](#)]