

Children **in** Families **FIRST**

Sponsors: Senators Landrieu, Blunt, Inhofe, Klobuchar, and Shaheen, and Representatives Granger, Bass, Bonamici, Franks, and Sires

As of August 1, 2013



The Problem: Every day, all over the world, more children find themselves living without families – on the streets, in orphanages, in refugee camps. By some estimates, there are now 200 million orphans in the world. But the United States government, through our foreign policy and programming, isn't helping turn this around. Americans know that family is the bedrock of any society, and that children need the permanent love, care, and protection of a family to grow into healthy, productive adults. Although U.S. foreign policy in theory emphasizes preserving or creating safe, permanent families for children, through family reunification, domestic, kinship, or inter-country adoption, the structures and coordination aren't there to make it happen. We need change, and it will take legislation to get us on the right path.

Legislation as Part of the Solution:

CHIFF redirects a modest amount of U.S. resources to focus more on ensuring that all children grow up in families and draws on the strengths of four agencies to help achieve this critical goal. The legislation:

- Creates a focal point within the **Department of State** for vulnerable children and family security that will become the foreign policy and diplomatic hub on international child welfare. The current Office of Children's Issues, Adoption Division would be moved out of the Bureau of Consular Affairs and turned into a new, stronger policy and program Bureau in the human rights secretariat. The new Bureau would help build international capacity to implement effective child welfare systems, with particular focus on family preservation and



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- reunification, and kinship, domestic, and inter-country adoption. While the new Bureau would remain the Central Authority on inter-country adoptions for diplomatic purposes, operational responsibilities would be transferred to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS);
- Streamlines, simplifies and consolidates responsibility for all processing of inter-country adoption cases in **USCIS** (except final immigrant visa processing, which remains with State); transfers adoption service provider accreditation from the Department of State to USCIS; and
- Establishes a Center of Excellence within **USAID**, dedicated to implementation of the 2012 *National Action Plan on Children in Adversity, A Framework for International Assistance*, and provides necessary authority and oversight of resources to the USAID Senior Coordinator for Children in Adversity to implement a demonstration program in target countries.



Bill Status and Points of Contact:

Discussion draft in circulation; introduction planned for September.

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