

113TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# H. RES. 577

Recognizing National Foster Care Month as an opportunity to raise awareness about the challenges of children in the foster care system, and encouraging Congress to implement policy to improve the lives of children in the foster care system.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 8, 2014

Ms. BASS (for herself, Mrs. BACHMANN, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. BARLETTA, Mr. CUMMINGS, Mr. BENTIVOLIO, Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. BISHOP of Georgia, Mrs. DAVIS of California, Ms. BONAMICI, Mr. DEFazio, Mr. BRALEY of Iowa, Ms. DEGETTE, Ms. BROWN of Florida, Ms. DELAURO, Ms. BROWNLEY of California, Mr. DEUTCH, Mrs. BUSTOS, Mr. DOGGETT, Mrs. CAPPS, Ms. EDWARDS, Mr. CÁRDENAS, Mr. ELLISON, Mr. CARSON of Indiana, Ms. FRANKEL of Florida, Mrs. CHRISTENSEN, Mr. FRANKS of Arizona, Ms. CHU, Ms. FUDGE, Mr. CICILLINE, Mr. AL GREEN of Texas, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. CLAY, Ms. HAHN, Mr. CLEAVER, Mrs. HARTZLER, Mr. CONYERS, Mr. HASTINGS of Florida, Mr. COOK, Mr. HECK of Washington, Mr. COOPER, Mr. HIMES, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Mr. HONDA, Mr. JEFFRIES, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. KEATING, Ms. KELLY of Illinois, Mr. KILDEE, Mr. KILMER, Ms. KUSTER, Mr. LANGEVIN, Mr. LATHAM, Ms. LEE of California, Mr. LEWIS, Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM of New Mexico, Mr. SEAN PATRICK MALONEY of New York, Mr. MARINO, Mr. MATHESON, Ms. MATSUI, Mr. McDERMOTT, Mr. McGOVERN, Mr. McNERNEY, Mr. MESSER, Mr. MURPHY of Florida, Ms. NORTON, Mr. NUNNELEE, Mr. O’ROURKE, Mr. PALLONE, Mr. PAYNE, Mr. PETERS of California, Mr. PETERSON, Mr. PIERLUISI, Mr. POCAN, Mr. PRICE of North Carolina, Mr. RANGEL, Mr. REICHERT, Mr. RICHMOND, Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD, Mr. SCHIFF, Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia, Mr. SCOTT of Virginia, Ms. SEWELL of Alabama, Ms. SHEA-PORTER, Mr. SIRES, Ms. SPEIER, Mr. STOCKMAN, Mr. TAKANO, Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi, Mr. THOMPSON of California, Ms. TITUS, Ms. TSONGAS, Mr. VARGAS, Mr. WAXMAN, Mr. WELCH, Ms. WILSON of Florida, Mr. YARMUTH, Mr. HOLT, and Mr. VEASEY) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Ways and Means

# RESOLUTION

Recognizing National Foster Care Month as an opportunity to raise awareness about the challenges of children in the foster care system, and encouraging Congress to implement policy to improve the lives of children in the foster care system.

Whereas National Foster Care Month was established more than 20 years ago to—

- (1) bring foster care issues to the forefront;
- (2) highlight the importance of permanency for every child; and
- (3) recognize the essential role that foster parents, social workers, and advocates have in the lives of children in foster care throughout the United States;

Whereas all children deserve a safe, loving, and permanent home;

Whereas the primary goal of the foster care system is to ensure the safety and well-being of children while working to provide a safe, loving, and permanent home for each child;

Whereas there are approximately 400,000 children living in foster care;

Whereas there were approximately 252,000 youth that entered the foster care system in 2012, while nearly 102,000 youth were eligible and awaiting adoption at the end of 2012;

Whereas foster care is intended to be a temporary placement, but children remain in the foster care system for an average of 2 years;

Whereas African-American and Native American children are more likely to stay in the foster care system for longer periods of time and are less likely to be reunited with their biological families;

Whereas foster parents are the front-line caregivers for children who cannot safely remain with their biological parents and provide physical care, emotional support, education advocacy, and are the largest single source of families providing permanent homes for children leaving foster care to adoption;

Whereas children in foster care who are placed with relatives, compared to children placed with nonrelatives, have more stability, including fewer changes in placements, have more positive perceptions of their placements, are more likely to be placed with their siblings, and demonstrate fewer behavioral problems;

Whereas some relative caregivers receive less financial assistance and support services than do foster caregivers;

Whereas recent studies show children in foster care are prescribed psychotropic medication at rates up to 11 times higher than other children on Medicaid and in amounts that exceed the Food and Drug Administration's guidelines;

Whereas youth in foster care are much more likely to face educational instability with 34 percent of foster youth ages 17 to 18 experiencing at least 7 changes while in care;

Whereas youth in foster care are often cut off from other youth and face hurdles in the participating in activities common to their peers, such as sports or participating in extracurricular activities;

Whereas youth in foster care are more susceptible to being trafficked, and more needs to be done to prevent, identify, and intervene when a child becomes a victim of the crime;

Whereas an increased emphasis on prevention and reunification services is necessary to reduce the number of children that are forced to remain in the foster care system;

Whereas more than 23,400 youth “age-out” of foster care annually without a legal permanent connection to an adult or family;

Whereas children who “age-out” of foster care lack the security or support of a biological or adoptive family and frequently struggle to secure affordable housing, obtain health insurance, pursue higher education, and acquire adequate employment;

Whereas nearly half of children in foster care for five or more years experience 7 or more different foster care placements, which often leads to disruption of routines and the need to change schools and move away from siblings, extended families, and familiar surroundings;

Whereas children entering foster care often confront the widespread misperception that children in foster care are disruptive, unruly, and dangerous, even though placement in foster care is based on the actions of a parent or guardian, not the child;

Whereas States, localities, and communities should be encouraged to invest resources in preventative and reunification services and post-permanency programs to ensure that more children in foster care are provided with safe, loving, and permanent placements;

Whereas Federal legislation over the past three decades, including the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 (Public Law 96–272), the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (Public Law 105–89), the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (Public Law 110–351), the Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act (Public Law 112–34), and the Uninterrupted Scholars Act (Public Law 112–278) provided new investments and services to improve the outcomes of children in the foster care system;

Whereas the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Children Bureau has designated May as National Foster Care Month under the theme “to help build blocks toward permanent families for foster youth”;

Whereas May would be an appropriate month to designate as National Foster Care Month to provide an opportunity to acknowledge the accomplishments of the child-welfare workforce, foster parents, advocacy community, and mentors for their dedication, accomplishments, and positive impact they have on the lives of children; and

Whereas much remains to be done to ensure that all children have a safe, loving, nurturing, and permanent family, regardless of age or special needs: Now, therefore, be it

1       *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2               (1) recognizes National Foster Care Month as  
3               an opportunity to raise awareness about the chal-  
4               lenges that children face in the foster-care system;

5               (2) encourages Congress to implement policy to  
6               minimize the number of children entering the foster  
7               care system, to improve the lives of children in the

1 foster care system, and to maximize the number of  
2 children exiting foster care to the protection of safe,  
3 loving, and permanent families;

4 (3) supports the designation of National Foster  
5 Care Month;

6 (4) acknowledges the unique needs of children  
7 in the foster-care system;

8 (5) recognizes foster youth throughout the  
9 United States for their ongoing tenacity, courage,  
10 and resilience while facing life challenges;

11 (6) acknowledges the exceptional alumni of the  
12 foster-care system who serve as advocates and role  
13 models for youth who remain in care;

14 (7) honors the commitment and dedication of  
15 the individuals who work tirelessly to provide assist-  
16 ance and services to children in the foster-care sys-  
17 tem; and

18 (8) reaffirms the need to continue working to  
19 improve the outcomes of all children in the foster-  
20 care system through parts B and E of title IV of the  
21 Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) and  
22 other programs designed to—

23 (A) support vulnerable families;

24 (B) invest in prevention and reunification  
25 services;

1           (C) promote guardianship, adoption, and  
2           other permanent placement opportunities in  
3           cases where reunification is not in the best in-  
4           terests of the child;

5           (D) adequately serve those children  
6           brought into the foster-care system; and

7           (E) facilitate the successful transition into  
8           adulthood for children that “age-out” of the  
9           foster-care system.

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