



October 22, 2008

The Honorable Pete Stark
United States House of Representatives
239 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Stark:

The Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) a ninety year-old organization representing hundreds of public and private child-serving member agencies located in all fifty states appreciates your efforts to promote best practice in the adoption of children from the child welfare system. In regards to the Every Child Deserves a Family Act, we believe that all potential parents should be assessed on the basis of their abilities to successfully parent a child needing family membership and not on their race, ethnicity or culture, income, age, marital status, religion, appearance, differing lifestyle, or sexual orientation.

As we stated in our transition paper to the President, the best interest of the child must be paramount in any decisions concerning placement of children and the provision of services. We feel that improvements are needed in regard to best practice in the placement of children. In particular, improvements in placement decisions are needed in the areas of the potential parent's sexual orientation, cultural heritage, and race.

We welcome the involvement of Congress and the Administration in a review of best practice in placement decisions and how best to move forward and encourage states and agencies in carrying out these practices. Based on more than three decades of social science research, CWLA believes that families with gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender members deserve the same levels of support afforded other families. Any attempt to preclude or prevent gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals or couples from parenting, based solely on their sexual orientation, is not in the best interest of children. Additionally, CWLA has raised concerns in the application of the Multiethnic Placement Act (MEPA) and the need to expand recruitment efforts so that we can begin to find permanent loving families for the more than 129,000 children waiting or ready for adoption. We see your legislation as an opportunity to begin this review.

We look forward to continuing to work on this critical issue. Thank you for your continued leadership on behalf of children and families. We look forward to working with you on crafting this legislation and advancing best practices that will allow more children to have permanent loving families.

Sincerely,

Christine James-Brown
President/CEO