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July 23, 2009

Representative Ron Kind
1406 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515
By Fax (202) 225-5739

Dear Representative Kind:

As the Acting Executive Director of the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, an organization dedicated to providing a strong, powerful voice for children, youth and families in Wisconsin, I am writing to ask for your support on a bill that would improve access to critical information about the condition of Wisconsin's children.

Representatives Chaka Fattah and Dave Camp have introduced H.R.2558, The State Child Well-Being Research Act of 2009, which would expand the National Survey of Child Health. I urge you to consider cosponsoring this legislation. (Senators Jay Rockefeller and Olympia Snowe have introduced companion legislation in the Senate, S.1151. We are hopeful that you can lend your voice to this important issue.

Over the past decade the federal government has given the states far greater power to administer programs for children and families. In order to make informed decisions about where our limited resources should be invested, we need accurate, timely and reliable data about Wisconsin's children and whether the current programs are providing them with the assistance they need. Moreover, the U.S. government needs this information in order to assure that our scarce federal dollars are spent effectively. Unfortunately, for the most part, that data does not currently exist.

The State Child Well-Being Research Act would expand the *National Survey of Child Health* and allow the collection and dissemination of important data in each and every state, rather than just the dozen or so feasible in the current SIPP program. Data would be collected on a rolling basis, so that key data would be available every year and subgroup data every two years. Data would be available to local, state, and federal policy-makers four to six months after collection. In Wisconsin, this data would be based on the experiences of about 1,800 families. We estimate that this study would cost \$20 million a year.

Furthermore, if Congress adopts the state-level data approach that we are supporting, it will be made even more useful because of a public/private partnership that has been proposed. The Annie E. Casey Foundation and other foundations have offered to invest at least \$1 million a year in order to train and provide technical assistance to state officials and policy analysts, thus

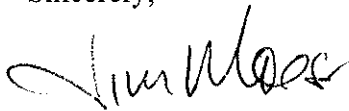
ensuring that the data will be understandable, accessible and will become an excellent tool to increase child well-being in our state.

The information collected would guide our decisions not just on programs for low-income residents, but also on a wide range of other programs serving Wisconsin children and families. While the Maternal and Child Health agency experts would determine the actual questions included in the survey in consultation with other federal agency staff and outside advisors, some information that could be gathered includes:

- Children's health data, to help guide decisions on how to best invest in improving children's health outcomes;
- Identification of children who are eligible for public health insurance but are not covered in order to increase enrollment rates in SCHIP;
- Data on children's contact with non-custodial parents, which can be used to improve fatherhood programs;
- Family structure and child well-being data (which can be used to assess the effectiveness of marriage promotion efforts funded through TANF);
- Data on parental perceptions of child-care quality, accessibility, and affordability;
- Data on the amount of time children generally spend in child care, in order to guide decisions on hourly work requirements for families moving from welfare to work.

We are hopeful you will support the State Child Well-Being Research Act. Elizabeth King, in Representative Fattah's office, is responsible for managing new sponsors. She can be reached at Elizabeth.King@mail.house.gov or 202-225-4001. We appreciate your work on behalf of children and families in our state. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Jim Moeser
Acting Executive Director