

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

July 9, 2015

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

We write to express our ongoing desire to work with you and your staff at the Department to better address the needs of children in adversity around the world. We greatly appreciate your personal commitment to this issue and your willingness to meet with us to discuss the Children in Families First legislation in the 113th Congress.

Since that time we have continued to face challenges in addressing the needs of children who lack access to the love and support that only a family can provide. We believe it is important that U.S. Government policy make child development and welfare a cornerstone for our broader diplomatic and development agenda. It is our intention to continue to move forward with legislative reforms that make the needs of children in adversity along with family preservation, reunification, and adoption a priority for U.S. foreign policy.

We understand that the Department has been actively working to improve its response to children in adversity and the process for families attempting to adopt from other countries. We are encouraged by recent efforts made by the Office of Children's Issues and respectfully request details on steps taken.

- What organizational, regulatory, and policy changes is the Department currently considering and/or implementing related to children in adversity and intercountry adoption, and what statutory authority has been exercised to allow these changes?
- What technical assistance is being provided to other countries in order to improve their domestic and international child welfare systems, including those countries' adoption policies? Additionally, please list which countries are currently receiving technical assistance, any plans to extend such assistance to other countries, as well as any barriers that might exist to providing such assistance.
- How many staff are dedicated to handling this type of international child welfare diplomacy, what is the current reporting structure of their specific office, and, finally, what are the general background qualifications of staff?
- To what extent has the Action Plan on Children in Adversity informed the changes proposed above?

- Please identify specific countries where the Department is pro-actively utilizing its current resources and personnel to remove existing barriers to international adoption. Please provide specific actions that have been taken, or are planned, to remove the obstacles preventing orphans in need of permanent families to be adopted by U.S. families willing to provide such homes.
- Has the Department conducted an interdepartmental review of its handling of policies related to children in adversity? To what extent has the current organizational structure of the Department informed, influenced, or made more difficult the changes proposed above?
- Current law requires 10 percent of total PEPFAR program funds to be allocated for programs focused on orphans and vulnerable children. What programs funded within this "10 percent set-aside" are designed to identify children affected by HIV/AIDS who are living outside family care and to finding those children safe, permanent and nurturing families?
- More broadly, to what extent has PEPFAR been involved in the implementation of the Action Plan on Children in Adversity?
- Would you be willing to include violations of the human rights of unparented children in the Department of State's annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, including denial of their fundamental right to grow up in permanent family care, whether through domestic or international adoption, and the extent to which harmful conditions exist in institutional and other state-sponsored forms of care?
- What, if any, additional statutory changes are needed in order to make clear the Department has authority to proceed with implementation of the changes proposed above?

We appreciate your ongoing attention to this matter and request the courtesy of a reply by Friday, July 17, 2015.

Sincerely,



Roy Blunt
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Kay Granger
Member of Congress



Karen Bass
Member of Congress



Trent Franks
Member of Congress