

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 12, 2010

SENATE CAUCUS ON FOSTER YOUTH

Dear Colleague:

We are writing to request your participation in a newly formed Senate Caucus on Foster Youth.

Over 500,000 children are currently in foster care. Many others have interactions with child welfare agencies. Since 1998, over 200,000 youth have aged out of foster care, often without critical supports necessary to transition into healthy adulthood.

Youth who leave foster care without a safe, permanent family often face negative life outcomes. One study found that 25 percent of foster care alumni who aged out did not have a high school diploma or GED. Less than 2 percent finished college, compared with 23 percent of youth in the general population. Over half of the youth who aged out of the foster care system experienced some homelessness, and nearly 30 percent were incarcerated. They were less likely to be employed or to have health insurance than members of their peer group who had not been in foster care.

The purpose of the Senate Caucus on Foster Youth is to focus attention on the multiple needs of both the youth in care and those who have aged out of care, particularly those who are disconnected from support networks and stable permanent families.

The Senate Caucus on Foster Youth will provide a forum for current and former foster youth to share their compelling stories and ideas for continued reform with Members of Congress and key staff.

The Caucus will host briefings from researchers, think tanks, foster care coalitions and other associations focused on child welfare with an emphasis on current or former foster youths.

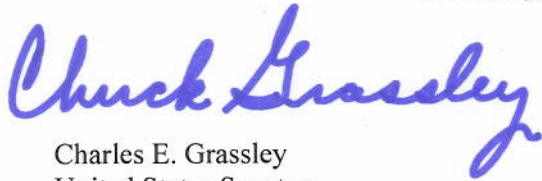
The Caucus will function as a clearinghouse for the most up-to-date research on child welfare, and assemble the most creative and groundbreaking ideas on how to coordinate services and improve outcomes for current and former foster youth.

Finally, the recently enacted, "Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008," includes a number of provisions affecting older current and former foster youth. The Caucus will monitor the bill's implementation and reach out to state leaders to proffer assistance where needed.

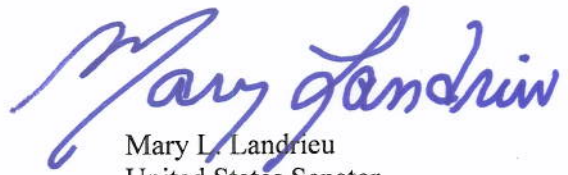
The following organizations support the Senate Caucus on Foster Youth: FosterClub, the Casey Foundation, the American Public Human Services Association, Voices for America's Children, the Child Welfare League of America, the National Foster Care Coalition, the Children's Defense Fund, the Foster Care Alumni of America, First Focus, Court Appointed Special Advocates, the John Burton Foundation, and the National Alliance to End Homelessness.

If you would like to join the Senate Caucus on Foster Youth, please contact Becky Shipp from Senator Grassley's office at 202-224-4515 or Peri Sarada from Senator Landrieu's office at 202-224-3532.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley
United States Senator



Mary L. Landrieu
United States Senator