

118TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

**S.** \_\_\_\_\_

To reauthorize child welfare programs under part B of title IV of the Social Security Act, and for other purposes.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

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Mr. CORNYN (for himself and Mr. BENNET) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on

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**A BILL**

To reauthorize child welfare programs under part B of title IV of the Social Security Act, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Protecting America’s  
5 Children by Strengthening Families Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. REFERENCES.**

7 Except as otherwise expressly provided, wherever in  
8 this Act an amendment or repeal is expressed in terms  
9 of an amendment to, or repeal of, a section or other provi-

1 sion, the reference shall be considered to be made to that  
2 section or other provision of the Social Security Act.

3 **SEC. 3. TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

4 The table of contents of this Act is as follows:

- Sec. 1. Short title.
- Sec. 2. References.
- Sec. 3. Table of contents.
- Sec. 4. Reauthorization of child welfare programs.
- Sec. 5. Enhancements to the court improvement program.
- Sec. 6. Expanding regional partnership grants to address parental substance use disorder as cause of child removal.
- Sec. 7. Modernization; reducing administrative burden.
- Sec. 8. Streamlining funding for Indian tribes.
- Sec. 9. Accelerating access to Family First prevention services.
- Sec. 10. Strengthening support for youth aging out of foster care.
- Sec. 11. Recognizing the importance of relative and kinship caregivers.
- Sec. 12. Avoiding neglect by addressing poverty.
- Sec. 13. Strengthening support for caseworkers.
- Sec. 14. Demonstration projects for improving relationships between incarcerated parents and children in foster care.
- Sec. 15. Guidance to States on improving data collection and reporting for youth in residential treatment programs.
- Sec. 16. Streamlining research, training, and technical assistance funding.
- Sec. 17. Report on post adoption and subsidized guardianship services.
- Sec. 18. Effective date.

5 **SEC. 4. REAUTHORIZATION OF CHILD WELFARE PRO-**  
6 **GRAMS.**

7 (a) REAUTHORIZATION OF SUBPART 1; DISCRE-  
8 TIONARY FUNDING.—Section 425 (42 U.S.C. 625) is  
9 amended by striking “2017 through 2023” and inserting  
10 “2025 through 2029”.

11 (b) REAUTHORIZATION OF SUBPART 2; ENHANCED  
12 SUPPORT.—Section 436(a) (42 U.S.C. 629f(a)) is amend-  
13 ed by striking “each of fiscal years 2017 through 2023”  
14 and inserting “fiscal year 2025 and \$420,000,000 for  
15 each of fiscal years 2026 through 2029”.

1 (c) REAUTHORIZATION OF SUBPART 2; DISCRE-  
2 TIONARY FUNDING.—Section 437(a) (42 U.S.C. 629g(a))  
3 is amended by striking “2017 through 2023” and insert-  
4 ing “2025 through 2029”.

5 (d) FUNDING LIMITATION.—Section 423(a)(2)(A)  
6 (42 U.S.C. 623(a)(2)(A)) is amended by inserting “, not  
7 to exceed \$10,000,000” before the semicolon.

8 **SEC. 5. ENHANCEMENTS TO THE COURT IMPROVEMENT**  
9 **PROGRAM.**

10 (a) INCREASE IN RESERVATION OF FUNDS.—Section  
11 436(b)(2) (42 U.S.C. 629f(b)(2)) is amended by inserting  
12 “for fiscal year 2025 and \$40,000,000 for fiscal year 2026  
13 and each succeeding fiscal year” before “for grants”.

14 (b) EXTENSION OF STATE MATCH REQUIREMENT.—  
15 Section 438(d) (42 U.S.C. 629h(d)) is amended by strik-  
16 ing “2017 through 2023” and inserting “2025 through  
17 2029”.

18 (c) PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS.—Section 438(a) (42  
19 U.S.C. 629h(a)) is amended—

20 (1) in paragraph (1), by adding at the end the  
21 following:

22 “(F) that determine the appropriateness  
23 and best practices for use of technology to con-  
24 duct remote hearings, subject to participant  
25 consent, including to ensure maximum partici-

1           pation of individuals involved in proceedings  
2           and to enable courts to maintain operations in  
3           times of public health or other emergencies;”;

4           (2) in paragraph (2)(C), by striking “per-  
5           sonnel.” and inserting “personnel and supporting  
6           optimal use of remote hearing technology; and”;

7           (3) by adding at the end the following:

8           “(3) to ensure continuity of needed court serv-  
9           ices, prevent disruption of the services, and enable  
10          their recovery from threats such as public health cri-  
11          ses, natural disasters or cyberattacks, including  
12          through—

13                 “(A) support for technology that allows  
14                 court proceedings to occur remotely subject to  
15                 participant consent, including hearings and  
16                 legal representation;

17                 “(B) the development of guidance and pro-  
18                 tocols for responding to the occurrences and co-  
19                 ordinating with other agencies; and

20                 “(C) other activities carried out to ensure  
21                 backup systems are in place.”.

22           (d) IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE ON SHARING BEST  
23 PRACTICES FOR TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGES NEEDED FOR  
24 REMOTE COURT PROCEEDINGS FOR FOSTER CARE OR

1 ADOPTION.—Section 438 (42 U.S.C. 629h) is amended by  
2 adding at the end the following:

3 “(e) GUIDANCE.—

4 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Every 5 years, the Sec-  
5 retary shall issue implementation guidance for shar-  
6 ing information on best practices for—

7 “(A) technological changes needed for  
8 court proceedings for foster care, guardianship,  
9 or adoption to be conducted remotely in a way  
10 that maximizes engagement and protects the  
11 privacy of participants; and

12 “(B) the manner in which the proceedings  
13 should be conducted.

14 “(2) INITIAL ISSUANCE.—The Secretary shall  
15 issue initial guidance required by paragraph (1) with  
16 preliminary information on best practices not later  
17 than October 1, 2025.

18 “(3) ADDITIONAL CONSULTATION.—The Sec-  
19 retary shall consult with Indian tribes on the devel-  
20 opment of appropriate guidelines for State court  
21 proceedings involving Indian children to maximize  
22 engagement of Indian tribes and provide appropriate  
23 guidelines on conducting State court proceedings  
24 subject to the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (25  
25 U.S.C. 1901 et seq.).”.

1 **SEC. 6. EXPANDING REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP GRANTS TO**  
2 **ADDRESS PARENTAL SUBSTANCE USE DIS-**  
3 **ORDER AS CAUSE OF CHILD REMOVAL.**

4 (a) INCREASE IN RESERVATION OF FUNDS.—Section  
5 436(b)(5) (42 U.S.C. 629f(b)(5)) is amended by striking  
6 “each of fiscal years 2017 through 2023” and inserting  
7 “fiscal year 2025 and \$30,000,000 for fiscal year 2026  
8 and each succeeding fiscal year”.

9 (b) REAUTHORIZATION.—Section 437(f) (42 U.S.C.  
10 629g(f)) is amended—

11 (1) in paragraph (3)(A)—

12 (A) by striking “In addition to amounts  
13 authorized to be appropriated to carry out this  
14 section, the” and inserting “The”; and

15 (B) by striking “2017 through 2023” and  
16 inserting “2025 through 2029”; and

17 (2) in paragraph (10), by striking “for each of  
18 fiscal years 2017 through 2023”.

19 (c) AUTHORITY TO WAIVE PLANNING PHASE.—Sec-  
20 tion 437(f)(3)(B)(iii) (42 U.S.C. 629g(f)(3)(B)(iii)) is  
21 amended—

22 (1) by striking all that precedes “grant award-  
23 ed” and inserting the following:

24 “(iii) SUFFICIENT PLANNING.—

25 “(I) IN GENERAL.—A”; and



1 (B) by striking the period at the end of  
2 subparagraph (E) and inserting “; and”; and

3 (C) by adding at the end the following:

4 “(F) have submitted information pursuant  
5 to paragraph (4)(F) that demonstrates the ca-  
6 pability to participate in rigorous evaluation of  
7 program effectiveness.”.

8 (e) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ON USING REGIONAL  
9 PARTNERSHIP GRANT FUNDS IN COORDINATION WITH  
10 OTHER FEDERAL FUNDS TO BETTER SERVE FAMILIES  
11 AFFECTED BY A SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER.—Section  
12 435(d) (42 U.S.C. 629e(d)) is amended—

13 (1) by striking “and” at the end of paragraph  
14 (4);

15 (2) by striking the period at the end of para-  
16 graph (5) and inserting “; and”; and

17 (3) by adding at the end the following:

18 “(6) use grants under section 437(f) in coordi-  
19 nation with other Federal funds to better serve fami-  
20 lies in the child welfare system that are affected by  
21 a substance use disorder.”.

22 (f) PERFORMANCE INDICATORS.—Section  
23 437(f)(8)(A) (42 U.S.C. 629g(f)(8)(A)) is amended in the  
24 1st sentence—



1           (1) by striking “this subsection” the 1st place  
2           it appears and inserting “the Protecting America’s  
3           Children by Strengthening Families Act”;

4           (2) by inserting “child permanency, reunifica-  
5           tion, re-entry into care,” before “parental recovery”;  
6           and

7           (3) by inserting “, and access to services for  
8           families with substance use disorder, including those  
9           with children who are overrepresented in foster care,  
10          difficult to place, or have disproportionately low per-  
11          manency rates” before the period.

12          (g) PERFORMANCE INDICATOR CONSULTATION RE-  
13          QUIRED.—Section        437(f)(8)(B)        (42        U.S.C.  
14          629g(f)(8)(B)) is amended by redesignating clause (iii) as  
15          clause (iv) and inserting after clause (ii) the following:

16                                “(iii) The Administrator of the Na-  
17                                tional Institute on Drug Abuse.”.

18          (h) REPORTS TO CONGRESS.—Section 437(f)(9)(B)  
19          (42 U.S.C. 629g(f)(9)(B)) is amended—

20           (1) by striking “and” at the end of clause (ii);

21           (2) by striking the period at the end of clause  
22          (iii) and inserting “; and”; and

23           (3) by adding at the end the following:

24                                “(iv) whether any programs funded by  
25                                the grants were submitted to the clearing-

1 house established under section 476(d) for  
2 review and the results of any such re-  
3 view.”.

4 (i) PRIORITY FOR STATEWIDE SERVICE GROWTH.—  
5 Section 437(f)(7) (42 U.S.C. 629g(f)(7)), as amended by  
6 subsection (d)(2) of this section, is amended—

7 (1) by striking “and” at the end of subpara-  
8 graph (E);

9 (2) by striking the period at the end of sub-  
10 paragraph (F) and inserting “; and”; and

11 (3) by adding at the end the following:

12 “(G) are a State or public agency, or out-  
13 line a plan to increase the availability of serv-  
14 ices funded under the grant statewide.”.

15 (j) ADDITION OF JUVENILE COURT AS REQUIRED  
16 PARTNER.—Section 437(f)(2)(A) (42 U.S.C.  
17 629g(f)(2)(A)) is amended by adding at the end the fol-  
18 lowing:

19 “(iii) The most appropriate adminis-  
20 trative office of the juvenile court or State  
21 court overseeing court proceedings involv-  
22 ing families who come to the attention of  
23 the court due to child abuse or neglect.”.

24 (k) ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL PARTNER.—Section  
25 437(f)(2)(C) (42 U.S.C. 629g(f)(2)(C)) is amended by re-

1 designating clause (ix) as clause (x) and inserting after  
2 clause (viii) the following:

3 “(ix) State or local agencies that ad-  
4 minister Federal health care, housing, fam-  
5 ily support, or other related programs.”.

6 (l) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

7 (1) Section 437(f)(2)(D) (42 U.S.C.  
8 629g(f)(2)(D)) is amended—

9 (A) by adding “and” at the end of clause  
10 (i);

11 (B) by striking “; and” at the end of  
12 clause (ii) and inserting a period; and

13 (C) by striking clause (iii).

14 (2) Section 437(f)(2) (42 U.S.C. 629g(f)(2)) is  
15 amended by striking subparagraph (B) and redesign-  
16 ating subparagraphs (C) and (D) as subparagraphs  
17 (B) and (C), respectively

18 **SEC. 7. MODERNIZATION; REDUCING ADMINISTRATIVE**  
19 **BURDEN.**

20 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 431 (42 U.S.C. 629a) is  
21 amended by adding at the end the following:

22 “(c) USE OF TECHNOLOGY.—

23 “(1) USE OF PORTAL.—The services referred to  
24 in subsection (a) may include the means of access to  
25 and use of an electronic or digital portal to facilitate

1 the provision of community support to care for and  
2 meet specific needs of families and children.

3 “(2) LIMITATION.—Such a portal shall not re-  
4 tain or share personally identifiable information  
5 about a beneficiary without consent or for any pur-  
6 pose other than referral.”.

7 (b) ALLOWING SUPPORT FOR FAMILY RESOURCE  
8 CENTERS.—Section 431(a) (42 U.S.C. 629a(a)) is amend-  
9 ed—

10 (1) in paragraph (2)(A), by inserting “, includ-  
11 ing services provided by family resource centers,”  
12 before “designed”; and

13 (2) by adding at the end the following:

14 “(10) FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER.—

15 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The term ‘family re-  
16 source center’ means a community or school-  
17 based hub of support services for families  
18 that—

19 “(i) utilizes an approach that is multi-  
20 generational, strengths-based, and family-  
21 centered;

22 “(ii) reflects, and is responsive to,  
23 community needs and interests;

24 “(iii) provides support at no or low  
25 cost for participants; and

1                   “(iv) builds communities of peer sup-  
2                   port for families, including kinship fami-  
3                   lies, to develop social connections that re-  
4                   duce isolation and stress.

5                   “(B) SPECIAL RULE.—For purposes of  
6                   this subpart, an expenditure for a service pro-  
7                   vided by a family resource center may be treat-  
8                   ed as an expenditure for any 1 or more of fam-  
9                   ily support services, family preservation serv-  
10                  ices, family reunification services, or adoption  
11                  promotion and support services as long as the  
12                  expenditure is related to serving the children  
13                  and families in the specified category and con-  
14                  sistent with the overall purpose of the cat-  
15                  egory.”.

16                  (c) UPDATING STATE PLAN REQUIREMENT.—Sec-  
17                  tion 422(b)(1) (42 U.S.C. 622(b)(1)) is amended to read  
18                  as follows:

19                         “(1) provide that a State agency will administer  
20                         or supervise the administration of the plan under  
21                         this subpart;”.

22                  (d) ACCESS TO LEGAL REPRESENTATION.—Section  
23                  422(b)(4) (42 U.S.C. 622(b)(4)) is amended—

24                         (1) by striking “and” at the end of subpara-  
25                         graph (A);

1           (2) by adding “and” at the end of subpara-  
2 graph (B); and

3           (3) by adding at the end the following:

4                   “(C) the steps that the State will take to  
5 ensure that, with respect to any judicial pro-  
6 ceeding involving a child and in which there is  
7 an allegation of child abuse or neglect, includ-  
8 ing a proceeding on dependency, adoption,  
9 guardianship, or termination of parental rights,  
10 information about available independent legal  
11 representation is provided to—

12                           “(i) the child, as appropriate; and

13                           “(ii) any individual who is a parent or  
14 guardian, or has legal custody, of the  
15 child;”.

16           (e) SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-  
17 BEING OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE.—Section  
18 422(b)(15)(A) (42 U.S.C. 622(b)(15) is amended—

19           (1) in the matter preceding clause (i)—

20                   (A) by inserting “and, if applicable, the  
21 State agency responsible for mental health serv-  
22 ices,” before “and in consultation”; and

23                   (B) by inserting “mental health pro-  
24 viders,” before “other experts”;

1           (2) in clause (ii), by inserting “a list of services  
2           provided to support the physical and” before “emo-  
3           tional”;

4           (3) in clause (iv), by inserting “and mental  
5           health” before “services”;

6           (4) in clause (v), by inserting “, informed con-  
7           sent of youth, and compliance with professional  
8           practice guidelines” before the semicolon; and

9           (5) in clause (vi), by inserting “, licensed men-  
10          tal health providers,” before “or other”.

11          (f) REDUCTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN.—

12           (1) IN GENERAL.—Subpart 3 of part B of title  
13          IV (42 U.S.C. 629m) is amended by redesignating  
14          section 440 as section 443 and inserting before such  
15          section the following:

16          **“SEC. 441. REDUCTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN.**

17           “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall reduce the  
18          burden of administering this part imposed on the recipi-  
19          ents of funds under this part, by—

20           “(1) reviewing and revising administrative data  
21          collection instruments and forms to eliminate dupli-  
22          cation and streamline reporting requirements for the  
23          recipients while collecting all data required under  
24          this part;

1           “(2) in coordination with activities required  
2           under the Paperwork Reduction Act, conducting an  
3           analysis of the total number of hours reported by  
4           the recipients to comply with paperwork require-  
5           ments and exploring, in consultation with the recipi-  
6           ents, how to reduce the number of hours required  
7           for the compliance by at least 15 percent;

8           “(3) collecting input from the recipients with  
9           respect to fiscal and oversight requirements and  
10          making changes to ensure consistency with stand-  
11          ards and guidelines for other Federal formula grant  
12          programs based on the input; and

13          “(4) respecting the sovereignty of Indian tribes  
14          when complying with this subsection.

15          “(b) **LIMITATION ON APPLICABILITY.**—Subsection  
16 (a) of this section shall not apply to any reporting or data  
17 collection otherwise required by law that would affect the  
18 ability of the Secretary to monitor and ensure compliance  
19 with State plans approved under this part or ensure that  
20 funds are expended consistent with this part.

21 **“SEC. 442. PUBLIC ACCESS TO STATE PLANS.**

22          “The Secretary shall—

23               “(1) create a standardized format for State  
24               plans required under sections 422 and 432 used to  
25               monitor compliance with those sections;



1           “(2) produce comparisons and analyses of  
2 trends in State plans to inform future technical as-  
3 sistance and policy development;

4           “(3) make the State plans available on a public  
5 website; and

6           “(4) include on the website aggregated national  
7 summaries of State submissions as the Secretary  
8 deems appropriate.”.

9           (2) IMPLEMENTATION.—Within 2 years after  
10 the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary  
11 of Health and Human Services shall—

12                 (A) comply with section 441 of the Social  
13 Security Act, as added by the amendment made  
14 by paragraph (1); and

15                 (B) notify each recipient of funds under  
16 part B of title IV of the Social Security Act of  
17 any change made by the Secretary pursuant to  
18 such section affecting the recipient.

19           (3) REPORT.—Within 3 years after the date of  
20 the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Health  
21 and Human Services shall submit to the Committee  
22 on Ways and Means of the House of Representatives  
23 and the Committee on Finance of the Senate a re-  
24 port describing the efforts of the Secretary to com-  
25 ply with section 441 of the Social Security Act, as

1 added by the amendment made by paragraph (1), in-  
2 cluding the specific actions to comply with each  
3 paragraph of such section.

4 (g) PRIMARY PREVENTION PARTNERS.—Section  
5 435(a)(2)(B) (42 U.S.C. 429e(a)(2)(B)) is amended by in-  
6 serting “including community-based partners with exper-  
7 tise in preventing unnecessary child welfare system in-  
8 volvement” before the semicolon.

9 **SEC. 8. STREAMLINING FUNDING FOR INDIAN TRIBES.**

10 (a) SUBPART 1.—

11 (1) TRIBAL SET-ASIDE; DIRECT PAYMENTS TO  
12 TRIBES; EXEMPTIVE AUTHORITY.—

13 (A) IN GENERAL.—Section 428 (42 U.S.C.  
14 628) is amended by striking subsections (a) and  
15 (b) and inserting the following:

16 “(a) RESERVATION OF FUNDS; DIRECT PAY-  
17 MENTS.—Out of any amount appropriated pursuant to  
18 section 425 for a fiscal year, the Secretary shall reserve  
19 3 percent for grants to Indian tribes and tribal organiza-  
20 tions, which shall be paid directly to Indian tribes and  
21 tribal organizations with a plan approved under this sub-  
22 part, in accordance with section 433(a).”.

23 (B) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section  
24 423(a) (42 U.S.C. 623(a)) is amended by strik-  
25 ing “the sum appropriated pursuant to section

1           425 for each fiscal year” and inserting “for  
2           each fiscal year, the sum appropriated pursuant  
3           to section 425 remaining after applying section  
4           428(a)”.

5           (C) TECHNICAL AMENDMENT.—Section  
6           428(c) (42 U.S.C. 628(c)) is amended by strik-  
7           ing “450b” and inserting “5304”.

8           (2) IMPROVING COMPLIANCE WITH THE INDIAN  
9           CHILD WELFARE ACT.—

10           (A) STATE PLAN REQUIREMENT.—Section  
11           422(b)(9) (42 U.S.C. 622(b)(9)) is amended by  
12           striking “Act;” and inserting “Act of 1978, in-  
13           cluding how the State will ensure timely notice  
14           to Indian tribes of State custody proceedings  
15           involving Indian children, foster care or adop-  
16           tive placements of Indian children, and case  
17           recordkeeping as such matters relate to trans-  
18           fers of jurisdiction, termination of parental  
19           rights, and active efforts;”.

20           (B) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—Subpart 1  
21           of part B of title IV (42 U.S.C. 621 et seq.) is  
22           amended by adding at the end the following:

1 **“SEC. 429B. EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INDIAN**  
2 **CHILD WELFARE ACT OF 1978.**

3 “(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than October 1, 2025,  
4 the Secretary, in consultation with Indian tribal organiza-  
5 tions and States, shall develop a plan and provide tech-  
6 nical assistance supporting effective implementation of the  
7 Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, including specific meas-  
8 ures identified in State plans as required by section  
9 422(b)(9) of this Act. The technical assistance plan shall  
10 be based on data sufficient to assess State strengths and  
11 areas for improvement in implementing Federal standards  
12 established under the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978,  
13 including, at a minimum, the following:

14 “(1) Timely identification of Indian children  
15 and extended family members.

16 “(2) Timely tribal notice of State child custody  
17 proceedings involving an Indian child.

18 “(3) Reports of cases in which a transfer of ju-  
19 risdiction (as defined under the Indian Child Wel-  
20 fare Act of 1978) was granted or was not granted,  
21 and reasons specified for denial in cases where  
22 transfer was denied.

23 “(4) In cases in which a State court orders a  
24 foster care placement of an Indian child, whether re-  
25 quirements for active efforts to prevent the breakup

1 of the Indian family, testimony of a qualified expert  
2 witness, and evidentiary standards were met.

3 “(5) Whether an Indian child was placed in a  
4 placement that is required to be preferred under the  
5 Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, and if not, the  
6 reasons specified.

7 “(6) In cases in which a State court orders the  
8 termination of parental rights to an Indian child,  
9 whether requirements for active efforts to prevent  
10 the breakup of the Indian family, testimony of a  
11 qualified expert witness, and evidentiary standards  
12 were met.

13 “(b) INTERAGENCY COORDINATION.—On request of  
14 the Secretary, the Secretary of the Interior shall provide  
15 the Secretary with such guidance and assistance as may  
16 be necessary to facilitate informing States and public child  
17 welfare agencies on how to comply with the Indian Child  
18 Welfare Act of 1978, including specific measures identi-  
19 fied in State plans as required by section 422(b)(9) of this  
20 Act.

21 “(c) BIENNIAL REPORTS TO CONGRESS.—The Sec-  
22 retary shall biennially submit to the Committee on Ways  
23 and Means of the House of Representatives and the Com-  
24 mittee on Finance of the Senate a written report on how—

1           “(1) the States are complying with the Indian  
2           Child Welfare Act of 1978 and section 422(b)(9) of  
3           this Act, as informed by data collected under this  
4           section; and

5           “(2) the Secretary is assisting States and In-  
6           dian tribes to improve implementation of Federal  
7           standards established under the Indian Child Wel-  
8           fare Act of 1978.”.

9           (3) REPORTING REQUIREMENTS; ADMINISTRA-  
10          TIVE COSTS.—

11           (A) IN GENERAL.—Section 428 (42 U.S.C.  
12           628) is amended by redesignating subsection (c)  
13           as subsection (d) and inserting before such sub-  
14           section the following:

15           “(b) AUTHORITY TO STREAMLINE REPORTING RE-  
16          QUIREMENTS.—The Secretary shall, in consultation with  
17          the affected Indian tribes, modify any reporting require-  
18          ment imposed by or under this part on an Indian tribe,  
19          tribal organization, or tribal consortium if the total of the  
20          amounts allotted to the Indian tribe, tribal organization,  
21          or tribal consortium under this part for the fiscal year is  
22          not more than \$50,000, and in a manner that limits the  
23          administrative burden on any tribe to which not more than  
24          \$50,000 is allotted under this subpart for the fiscal year.

1           “(c) TRIBAL AUTHORITY TO SUBSTITUTE THE FED-  
2 ERAL NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATE FOR ADMINIS-  
3 TRATIVE COSTS CAP.—For purposes of sections  
4 422(b)(14) and 424(e), an Indian tribal organization may  
5 elect to have the weighted average of the indirect cost  
6 rates in effect under part 220 of title 2, Code of Federal  
7 Regulations with respect to the administrative costs of the  
8 Indian tribal organization apply in lieu of the percentage  
9 specified in each such section.”.

10                   (B) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Section  
11           431(a) (42 U.S.C. 629a(a)) is amended in each  
12           of paragraphs (5) and (6) by striking “428(c)”  
13           and inserting “428(d)”.

14           (b) SUBPART 2.—

15                   (1) TRIBAL PLAN EXEMPTION.—Section  
16           432(b)(2)(B) (42 U.S.C. 629b(b)(2)(B)) is amend-  
17           ed—

18                   (A) by striking “section 433(a)” the 1st  
19           place it appears and inserting “sections 433(a)  
20           and 437(c)(1) combined”; and

21                   (B) by striking “section 433(a)” the 2nd  
22           place it appears and inserting “such sections”.

23                   (2) APPLICATION OF TRIBAL SET-ASIDE BE-  
24           FORE OTHER SET-ASIDES.—Section 436(b)(3) (42  
25           U.S.C. 429f(b)(3)) is amended by striking “After

1 applying paragraphs (4) and (5) (but before apply-  
2 ing paragraphs (1) or (2)), the” and inserting  
3 “The”.

4 (3) INCREASE IN FUNDING FOR TRIBAL COURT  
5 IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM.—Section 438(c)(3) (42  
6 U.S.C. 629h(c)(3)) is amended by inserting “for fis-  
7 cal year 2025, and \$2,000,000 for each of fiscal  
8 years 2026 through 2029,” before “for grants”.

9 **SEC. 9. ACCELERATING ACCESS TO FAMILY FIRST PREVEN-**  
10 **TION SERVICES.**

11 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 435 (42 U.S.C. 629e) is  
12 amended by adding at the end the following:

13 “(f) PREVENTION SERVICES EVALUATION PARTNER-  
14 SHIPS.—

15 “(1) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this subsection  
16 is to authorize the Secretary to make competitive  
17 grants to support the timely evaluation of—

18 “(A) services and programs described in  
19 section 471(e); or

20 “(B) kinship navigator programs described  
21 in section 474(a)(7).

22 “(2) GRANTS.—In accordance with applications  
23 approved under this subsection, the Secretary may  
24 make grants, on a competitive basis, to eligible enti-  
25 ties to carry out projects designed to evaluate a serv-



1 ice or program provided by the eligible entity, or an  
2 entity in partnership with the eligible entity, with re-  
3 spect to the requirements for a promising practice,  
4 supported practice, or well-supported practice de-  
5 scribed in section 471(e)(4)(C).

6 “(3) APPLICATIONS.—

7 “(A) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity may  
8 apply to the Secretary for a grant under this  
9 subsection to carry out a project that meets the  
10 following requirements:

11 “(i) The project is designed in accord-  
12 ance with paragraph (2).

13 “(ii) The project is to be carried out  
14 by the applicant in partnership with—

15 “(I) a State agency that admin-  
16 isters, or supervises the administra-  
17 tion of, the State plan approved under  
18 part E, or an agency administering  
19 the plan under the supervision of the  
20 State agency; and

21 “(II) if the applicant is unable or  
22 unwilling to do so, at least 1 external  
23 evaluator to carry out the evaluation  
24 of the service or program provided by  
25 the applicant.

1                   “(B) CONTENTS.—The application shall  
2 contain the following:

3                   “(i) A description of the project, in-  
4 cluding—

5                   “(I) a statement explaining why  
6 a grant is necessary to carry out the  
7 project; and

8                   “(II) the amount of grant funds  
9 that would be disbursed to each entity  
10 described in subparagraph (A)(ii) in  
11 partnership with the applicant.

12                   “(ii) A certification from each entity  
13 described in subparagraph (A)(ii) that pro-  
14 vides assurances that the individual or en-  
15 tity is in partnership with the applicant  
16 and will fulfill the responsibilities of the  
17 entity specified in the description provided  
18 pursuant to clause (i) of this subpara-  
19 graph.

20                   “(iii) A certification from the appli-  
21 cant that provides assurances that the ap-  
22 plicant intends to comply with subpara-  
23 graph (A)(ii)(II), if applicable.

24                   “(iv) At the option of the eligible enti-  
25 ty, a certification from the applicant that

1           the applicant requires an external eval-  
2           uator secured by the Secretary pursuant to  
3           paragraph (5), if applicable.

4           “(4) PRIORITIES.—In approving applications  
5           under this subsection, the Secretary shall prioritize  
6           the following:

7                   “(A) Addressing, with respect to the clear-  
8           inghouse of practices described in section  
9           476(d)(2), deficiencies or gaps identified by the  
10          Secretary in consultation with—

11                   “(i) States, political subdivisions of a  
12           State, and tribal communities carrying out,  
13           or receiving the benefits of, a service or  
14           program; and

15                   “(ii) child welfare experts, including  
16           individuals with lived experience.

17                   “(B) Maximizing the number of evidence-  
18           based services or programs to be included in the  
19           clearinghouse of practices described in section  
20           476(d)(2).

21                   “(C) Timely completion of evaluations and  
22           the production of evidence.

23                   “(D) Supporting services or programs that  
24           are based on, or are adaptations to new popu-  
25           lation settings of, a service or program with re-

1           liable evidence about the benefits and risks of  
2           the service or program.

3           “(5) AVAILABILITY OF EXTERNAL EVAL-  
4           UATORS.—

5                   “(A) IN GENERAL.—Before accepting ap-  
6           plications under this subsection, the Secretary  
7           shall make reasonable efforts to identify at least  
8           1 entity to serve as an external evaluator for  
9           any eligible entity that includes a certification  
10          under paragraph (3)(B)(iv) with an application  
11          under this subsection.

12                   “(B) NO EFFECT ON CONSIDERATION OF  
13          APPLICATION.—The Secretary may not consider  
14          whether an eligible entity is in partnership with  
15          an external evaluator described in paragraph  
16          (A) in approving an application under this sub-  
17          section submitted by the eligible entity.

18          “(6) REPORTS.—

19                   “(A) BY GRANT RECIPIENTS.—Within 1  
20          year after receiving a grant under this sub-  
21          section, and every year thereafter for the next  
22          5 years, the grant recipient shall submit to the  
23          Secretary a written report on—

24                           “(i) the use of grant funds;

1                   “(ii) whether the program or service  
2                   evaluated by the project meets a require-  
3                   ment specified in section 471(e)(4)(C), in-  
4                   cluding information about—

5                   “(I) how the program or service  
6                   is being carried out in accordance  
7                   with standards specified in the re-  
8                   quirement;

9                   “(II) any outcomes of the pro-  
10                  gram or service; and

11                  “(III) any outcome with respect  
12                  to which the service or program com-  
13                  pares favorably to a comparison prac-  
14                  tice; and

15                  “(iii) whether the Secretary has in-  
16                  cluded the program or service in an update  
17                  to the clearinghouse of practices described  
18                  in section 476(d)(2).

19                  “(B) BY THE SECRETARY.—The Secretary  
20                  shall submit to the Committee on Ways and  
21                  Means of the House of Representatives and to  
22                  the Committee on Finance of the Senate an an-  
23                  nual written report on—

24                  “(i) the grants awarded under this  
25                  subsection;

1                   “(ii) the programs funded by the  
2 grants;

3                   “(iii) any technical assistance pro-  
4 vided by the Secretary in carrying out this  
5 subsection, including with respect to the  
6 efforts to secure external evaluators pursu-  
7 ant to paragraph (5); and

8                   “(iv) any efforts by the Secretary to  
9 support program evaluation and review  
10 pursuant to section 471(e) and inclusion of  
11 programs in the pre-approved list of serv-  
12 ices and programs described in section  
13 471(e)(4)(D) or the clearinghouse of prac-  
14 tices described in section 476(d)(2).

15                   “(7) FUNDING.—

16                   “(A) LIMITATIONS.—Of the amounts avail-  
17 able to carry out this subsection, the Secretary  
18 may use not more than 5 percent to provide  
19 technical assistance.

20                   “(B) CARRYOVER.—Amounts made avail-  
21 able to carry out this subsection shall remain  
22 available until expended.

23                   “(8) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

24                   “(A) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term ‘eligi-  
25 ble entity’ means any of the following providing

1 a service or program or, in the sole determina-  
2 tion of the Secretary, able to provide a service  
3 or program if awarded a grant under this sub-  
4 section:

5 “(i) A State, a political subdivision of  
6 a State, or an agency or department of a  
7 State or political subdivision of a State.

8 “(ii) An entity described in subpara-  
9 graph (A) or (B) of section 426(a)(1).

10 “(iii) An Indian tribe or tribal organi-  
11 zation.

12 “(B) EXTERNAL EVALUATOR.—The term  
13 ‘external evaluator’ means an entity with the  
14 ability and willingness to evaluate a service or  
15 program pursuant to paragraph (2) that is not  
16 provided by the entity.

17 “(C) SERVICE OR PROGRAM.—The term  
18 ‘service or program’—

19 “(i) means a service or program de-  
20 scribed in section 471(e); and

21 “(ii) includes a kinship navigator pro-  
22 gram described in section 474(a)(7).”.

23 (b) FUNDING.—Section 437(b) (42 U.S.C. 629g(b))  
24 is amended by adding at the end the following:

1           “(5) PREVENTIVE SERVICES EVALUATION  
2 PARTNERSHIPS.—The Secretary shall reserve  
3 \$5,000,000 for grants under section 435(f) for each  
4 of fiscal years 2026 through 2029.”.

5 **SEC. 10. STRENGTHENING SUPPORT FOR YOUTH AGING**  
6 **OUT OF FOSTER CARE.**

7           (a) CASEWORKER VISITS.—Section 422(b)(17) (42  
8 U.S.C. 622(b)(17)) is amended by inserting “, and include  
9 a description of how the State may offer virtual case-  
10 worker visits to youth in care who have attained the age  
11 of 18 years and provided informed consent for virtual vis-  
12 its” before the semicolon.

13           (b) YOUTH AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN CHILD  
14 WELFARE PROGRAM PLANNING.—Section 432(b)(1) (42  
15 U.S.C. 629b(b)(1)) is amended to read as follows:

16           “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall ap-  
17 prove a plan that meets the requirements of sub-  
18 section (a) only if—

19                   “(A) the plan was developed jointly by the  
20 Secretary and the State, and the State, in de-  
21 veloping the plan, consulted with—

22                           “(i) appropriate public and nonprofit  
23 private agencies;

24                           “(ii) community-based organizations  
25 involved in providing services for children



1 and families in the areas of family preser-  
2 vation, family support, family reunifica-  
3 tion, foster care, kinship, and adoption  
4 promotion and support;

5 “(iii) parents with child welfare expe-  
6 rience, foster parents, adoptive parents,  
7 and kinship caregivers; and

8 “(iv) children, youth, and young  
9 adults with experience in the child welfare  
10 system, including State boards and coun-  
11 cils comprised of youth with lived experi-  
12 ence who represent the diversity of chil-  
13 dren in the State to whom the plan would  
14 apply; and

15 “(B) the State has made publicly acces-  
16 sible on a website of the State agency a report  
17 that outlines how the State has implemented  
18 the suggestions of the children and youth re-  
19 ferred to in subparagraph (A)(iv).”.

20 **SEC. 11. RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIVE**  
21 **AND KINSHIP CAREGIVERS.**

22 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 431(a) (42 U.S.C.  
23 629a(a)), as amended by section 7(b)(2) of this Act, is  
24 amended—

25 (1) in paragraph (1)—

1 (A) in the matter preceding subparagraph

2 (A)—

3 (i) by striking “children” and insert-  
4 ing “children, youth,”; and

5 (ii) by striking “adoptive and ex-  
6 tended” and inserting “kinship and adop-  
7 tive”;

8 (B) in subparagraph (D), by striking “par-  
9 ents and other caregivers (including foster par-  
10 ents)” and inserting “parents, kinship care-  
11 givers, and foster parents”;

12 (C) by striking “and” at the end of sub-  
13 paragraph (E);

14 (D) by striking the period at the end of  
15 subparagraph (F) and inserting “ ; and”; and

16 (E) by adding at the end the following:

17 “(G)(i) peer-to-peer mentoring and support  
18 programs with demonstrated experience fos-  
19 tering constructive relationships between chil-  
20 dren and families and mentors with relevant  
21 lived experience or interactions with the child  
22 welfare system; and

23 “(ii) for purposes of this subpart, an ex-  
24 penditure for a service described in clause (i)  
25 may be treated as an expenditure for any 1 or

1 more of family support services, family preser-  
2 vation services, family reunification services, or  
3 adoption promotion and support services, as  
4 long as the expenditure is related to serving the  
5 children and families in the specified category  
6 and consistent with the overall purpose of the  
7 category.”;

8 (2) in paragraph (2)(B)—

9 (A) in clause (i), by striking “children”  
10 and inserting “children, youth,”; and

11 (B) in clause (ii), by striking “extended”  
12 and inserting “kinship”;

13 (3) in paragraph (7)(A), by inserting “with kin-  
14 ship caregivers or” before “in a foster family home”;  
15 and

16 (4) by adding at the end the following:

17 “(11) YOUTH.—The term ‘youth’ means an in-  
18 dividual who has not attained 26 years of age.”.

19 (b) KINSHIP NAVIGATORS.—

20 (1) IN GENERAL.—Section 427 (42 U.S.C. 627)  
21 is amended—

22 (A) in the section heading, by striking  
23 “**FAMILY CONNECTION GRANTS**” and insert-  
24 ing “**KINSHIP NAVIGATORS**”;

25 (B) in subsection (a)—

- 1 (i) in the matter preceding paragraph  
2 (1), by striking “helping” and inserting  
3 “administering programs to help”;
- 4 (ii) by striking “of—” and all that  
5 follows through “a kinship” and inserting  
6 “of a kinship”;
- 7 (iii) in paragraph (1)(C)—
- 8 (I) by striking “and” at the end  
9 of clause (iii);
- 10 (II) by adding “and” at the end  
11 of clause (iv); and
- 12 (III) by adding at the end the  
13 following:
- 14 “(v) connections to individualized as-  
15 sistance, as needed;”;
- 16 (iv) by striking paragraphs (2)  
17 through (4);
- 18 (v) by redesignating subparagraphs  
19 (A) through (G) of paragraph (1) as para-  
20 graphs (1) through (7), respectively;
- 21 (vi) by redesignating clauses (i)  
22 through (iv) and clause (v) (as added by  
23 clause (iii)(III) of this subparagraph) as  
24 subparagraphs (A) through (E), respec-  
25 tively;

1 (vii) by moving each provision so re-  
2 designated 2 ems to the left; and

3 (viii) by striking “caregiving;” and in-  
4 sserting “caregiving.”;

5 (C) in subsection (b)—

6 (i) in paragraph (1), by striking “1 or  
7 more of”;

8 (ii) by redesignating paragraphs (3)  
9 and (4) as paragraphs (4) and (5), respec-  
10 tively, and inserting after paragraph (2)  
11 the following:

12 “(3) a description of how the entity will directly  
13 fund, or provide data to the Secretary for, an eval-  
14 uation which will publish and submit information to  
15 the clearinghouse described in section 476(d)(2) and  
16 which is designed to meet the requirements of sec-  
17 tion 471(e)(4)(C), or a description of how the funds  
18 will be used to help the State transition to a pro-  
19 gram for which the State will seek reimbursement  
20 under section 474(a)(7);”;

21 (iii) in paragraph (4) (as so redesign-  
22 ated), by striking “and” at the end;

23 (iv) in paragraph (5) (as so redesign-  
24 ated), by striking the period and inserting  
25 “; and”; and

1 (v) by adding at the end the following:

2 “(6) if the entity is a State, local or tribal child  
3 welfare agency—

4 “(A) documentation of support from a rel-  
5 evant community-based organization with expe-  
6 rience serving kinship families when applicable;  
7 or

8 “(B) a description of how the organization  
9 plans to coordinate its services and activities  
10 with those offered by the relevant community-  
11 based organizations.”;

12 (D) by striking subsection (d) and insert-  
13 ing the following:

14 “(d) FEDERAL SHARE.—An entity to which a grant  
15 is made under this section may use the grant to pay not  
16 more than 75 percent of the cost of the activities to be  
17 carried out by the entity pursuant to this section.”;

18 (E) in subsection (g)—

19 (i) by striking all that precedes “2  
20 percent” and inserting the following:

21 “(g) RESERVATION OF FUNDS FOR TECHNICAL AS-  
22 SISTANCE.—The Secretary may reserve”; and

23 (ii) by striking “subsection (h)” the  
24 2nd place it appears and inserting “section  
25 437(b)(6)”; and

1 (F) by striking subsection (h).

2 (2) RESERVATION OF DISCRETIONARY  
3 FUNDS.—Section 437(b) (42 U.S.C. 629g(b)), as  
4 amended by section 9(b) of this Act, is amended by  
5 adding at the end the following:

6 “(6) KINSHIP NAVIGATORS.—The Secretary  
7 shall reserve \$10,000,000 for grants under section  
8 427 for each of fiscal years 2026 through 2029.”.

9 (3) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section  
10 474(a)(7) (42 U.S.C. 674(a)(7)) is amended by  
11 striking “427(a)(1)” and inserting “427(a)”.

12 **SEC. 12. AVOIDING NEGLECT BY ADDRESSING POVERTY.**

13 (a) FAMILY PRESERVATION SERVICES.—Section  
14 431(a)(1) (42 U.S.C. 629a(a)(1)), as amended by section  
15 11(a)(1) of this Act, is amended—

16 (1) in subparagraph (F), by striking “and”  
17 after the semicolon;

18 (2) in subparagraph (G), by striking the period  
19 and inserting “; and”; and

20 (3) by adding at the end the following:

21 “(H)(i) services providing nonrecurring  
22 short term benefits (including supports related  
23 to housing instability, utilities, transportation,  
24 and food assistance, among other basic needs)  
25 that address immediate needs related to a spe-

1           cific crisis, situation, or event affecting the abil-  
2           ity of a child to remain in a home established  
3           for the child that is not intended to meet an on-  
4           going need; and

5                   “(ii) for purposes of this subpart, an ex-  
6           penditure for a service described in clause (i)  
7           may be treated as an expenditure for any 1 or  
8           more of family support services, family preser-  
9           vation services, family reunification services, or  
10          adoption promotion and support services as  
11          long as the expenditure is related to serving the  
12          children and families in the specified category  
13          and consistent with the overall purpose of the  
14          category.”.

15          (b) STATE PLAN REQUIREMENTS.—Section 432(a)  
16 (42 U.S.C. 629b(a)) is amended—

17           (1) in paragraph (9), by striking “and” after  
18          the semicolon;

19           (2) in paragraph (10), by striking the period  
20          and inserting “; and”; and

21           (3) by adding at the end the following:

22                   “(11) provides a description of policies in place,  
23          including training for employees, to address child  
24          welfare reports and investigations of neglect con-  
25          cerning the living arrangements or subsistence needs



1 of a child with the goal to prevent the separation of  
2 a child from a parent of the child solely due to pov-  
3 erty, to ensure access to services described in section  
4 431(a)(1)(H).”.

5 **SEC. 13. STRENGTHENING SUPPORT FOR CASEWORKERS.**

6 (a) REAUTHORIZATION OF, AND INCREASE IN FUND-  
7 ING FOR, CASEWORKER VISITS.—Section 436(b)(4)(A)  
8 (42 U.S.C. 629f(b)(4)(A)) is amended by striking “each  
9 of fiscal years 2017 through 2023” and inserting “fiscal  
10 year 2025 and \$26,000,000 for fiscal year 2026 and each  
11 succeeding fiscal year”.

12 (b) MINIMUM GRANT AMOUNT.—Section 433(e) (42  
13 U.S.C. 629c(e)) is amended by striking paragraphs (1)  
14 and (2) and inserting the following:

15 “(1) BASE ALLOTMENT.—From the amount re-  
16 served pursuant to section 436(b)(4)(A) for any fis-  
17 cal year, the Secretary shall first allot to each State  
18 (other than an Indian tribe) that has provided to the  
19 Secretary such documentation as may be necessary  
20 to verify that the jurisdiction has complied with sec-  
21 tion 436(b)(4)(B)(ii) during the fiscal year, a base  
22 allotment of \$100,000, and shall then allot to each  
23 of those States an amount determined in paragraph  
24 (2) or (3) of this subsection, as applicable.

1           “(2) TERRITORIES.—From the amount reserved  
2           pursuant to section 436(b)(4)(A) for any fiscal year  
3           that remains after applying paragraph (1) of this  
4           subsection for the fiscal year, the Secretary shall  
5           allot to each jurisdiction specified in subsection (b)  
6           of this section to which a base allotment is made  
7           under such paragraph (1) an amount determined in  
8           the same manner as the allotment to each of such  
9           jurisdictions is determined under section 423 (with-  
10          out regard to the initial allotment of \$70,000 to  
11          each State).

12          “(3) OTHER STATES.—From the amount re-  
13          served pursuant to section 436(b)(4)(A) for any fis-  
14          cal year that remains after applying paragraphs (1)  
15          and (2) of this subsection for the fiscal year, the  
16          Secretary shall allot to each State (other than an In-  
17          dian tribe) not specified in subsection (b) of this sec-  
18          tion to which a base allotment was made under  
19          paragraph (1) of this subsection an amount equal to  
20          such remaining amount multiplied by the supple-  
21          mental nutrition assistance program benefits per-  
22          centage of the State (as defined in subsection (c)(2)  
23          of this section) for the fiscal year, except that in ap-  
24          plying subsection (c)(2)(A) of this section, ‘sub-

1 section (e)(3)' shall be substituted for 'such para-  
2 graph (1)'.’.

3 (c) REQUIREMENT TO USE FUNDS TO IMPROVE  
4 QUALITY OF CASEWORKER VISITS WITH FOSTER CHIL-  
5 DREN.—Section 436(b)(4)(B)(i) (42 U.S.C.  
6 629f(b)(4)(B)(i)) is amended to read as follows:

7 “(i) IN GENERAL.—A State to which  
8 an amount is paid from amounts reserved  
9 under subparagraph (A) shall use the  
10 amount to improve the quality of monthly  
11 caseworker visits with children who are in  
12 foster care under the responsibility of the  
13 State, with an emphasis on—

14 “(I) reducing caseload ratios and  
15 the administrative burden on case-  
16 workers, to improve caseworker deci-  
17 sion making on the safety, perma-  
18 nency, and well-being of foster chil-  
19 dren and on activities designed to in-  
20 crease retention, recruitment, and  
21 training of caseworkers;

22 “(II) implementing technology  
23 solutions to streamline caseworker du-  
24 ties and modernize systems, ensuring

1 improved efficiency and effectiveness  
2 in child welfare services;

3 “(III) improving caseworker safe-  
4 ty;

5 “(IV) mental health resources to  
6 support caseworker well-being, includ-  
7 ing peer-to-peer support programs;  
8 and

9 “(V) recruitment campaigns  
10 aimed at attracting qualified case-  
11 worker candidates.”.

12 (d) ELIMINATION OF COST-SHARE PENALTY TIED TO  
13 MONTHLY CASEWORKER VISIT STANDARD.—Section  
14 424(f) (42 U.S.C. 624(f)) is amended—

15 (1) by striking “(1)(A)”; and

16 (2) by striking paragraphs (1)(B) and (2).

17 **SEC. 14. DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS FOR IMPROVING RE-**  
18 **LATIONSHIPS BETWEEN INCARCERATED**  
19 **PARENTS AND CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE.**

20 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 439 (42 U.S.C. 629i) is  
21 amended to read as follows:

1 **“SEC. 439. STATE PARTNERSHIP PLANNING AND DEM-**  
2 **ONSTRATION GRANTS TO SUPPORT MEAN-**  
3 **INGFUL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN FOSTER**  
4 **CHILDREN AND THE INCARCERATED PAR-**  
5 **ENTS OF THE CHILDREN.**

6 “(a) AUTHORITY.—

7 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may make  
8 demonstration grants to eligible State partnerships  
9 to develop, implement, and provide support for pro-  
10 grams that enable and sustain meaningful relation-  
11 ships between covered foster children and the incar-  
12 cerated parents of the children.

13 “(2) PAYMENT OF ANNUAL INSTALLMENTS.—  
14 The Secretary shall pay each demonstration grant in  
15 5 annual installments.

16 “(3) 1-YEAR PLANNING GRANTS.—The Sec-  
17 retary may make a planning grant to a recipient of  
18 a demonstration grant, to be paid to the recipient 1  
19 year before payment of the 1st annual installment of  
20 the demonstration grant and in an amount not  
21 greater than any installment of the demonstration  
22 grant, if—

23 “(A) the recipient includes a request for a  
24 planning grant in the application under sub-  
25 section (c); and

1           “(B) the Secretary determines that a plan-  
2           ning grant would assist the recipient and im-  
3           prove the effectiveness of the demonstration  
4           grant.

5           “(b) ELIGIBLE STATE PARTNERSHIP DEFINED.—

6           “(1) IN GENERAL.—In this section, the term  
7           ‘eligible State partnership’ means an agreement en-  
8           tered into by, at a minimum, the following:

9           “(A) The State child welfare agency re-  
10          sponsible for the administration of the State  
11          plans under this part.

12          “(B) The State agency responsible for  
13          adult corrections.

14          “(2) ADDITIONAL PARTNERS.—For purposes of  
15          this section, an eligible State partnership may in-  
16          clude any entity with experience in serving incarcer-  
17          ated parents and their children.

18          “(3) PARTNERSHIPS ENTERED INTO BY INDIAN  
19          TRIBES OR TRIBAL CONSORTIA.—Notwithstanding  
20          paragraph (1), if an Indian tribe or tribal consor-  
21          tium enters into a partnership pursuant to this sec-  
22          tion that does not consist solely of tribal child wel-  
23          fare agencies (or a consortium of the agencies), the  
24          partnership shall be considered an eligible State  
25          partnership for purposes of this section.

1       “(c) APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS.—An eligible  
2 State partnership seeking a demonstration grant under  
3 this section to carry out a program described in subsection  
4 (a)(1) shall submit an application to the Secretary at such  
5 time, in such manner, and containing such information as  
6 the Secretary may require. The application shall include  
7 the following:

8               “(1) A summary of the program, including how  
9 the program will support a meaningful relationship  
10 between a covered foster child and an incarcerated  
11 parent of the child.

12               “(2) A description of the activities to be carried  
13 out by the program, which must include all of the  
14 activities described in subsection (d) that are in the  
15 best interest of the covered foster child.

16               “(3) A framework for identifying—

17                       “(A) each covered foster child eligible for  
18 services under the program, including, to the  
19 extent practicable, coordination of data between  
20 relevant State child welfare agencies and court  
21 systems; and

22                       “(B) the roles and responsibilities of the  
23 entities in the partnership.

24               “(4) Documentation that the applicant is an eli-  
25 gible State partnership.

1           “(5) Assurances that the applicant will partici-  
2           pate fully in the evaluation described in subsection  
3           (f)(2) and shall maintain records for the program,  
4           including demographic information disaggregated by  
5           relevant characteristics with respect to covered foster  
6           children and incarcerated parents who participate in  
7           the program.

8           “(d) PROGRAM ACTIVITIES.—To the extent that the  
9           activities are in the best interest of the covered foster  
10          child, the activities referred to in subsection (c)(2) shall  
11          include the following:

12           “(1) REVISION OF POLICIES.—Through con-  
13          sultation with incarcerated parents and their fami-  
14          lies, grantees shall promote organizational policies of  
15          participating child welfare entities and collaborating  
16          correctional facilities to promote meaningful rela-  
17          tionships through regular and developmentally ap-  
18          propriate communication and visitation between cov-  
19          ered foster children and the incarcerated parents, in-  
20          cluding, when appropriate, the following:

21           “(A) For child welfare entities—

22           “(i) inclusion of parents in case plan-  
23           ning and decision making for children;

24           “(ii) regular sharing of information  
25           and responses to requests for information



1 between caseworkers and incarcerated par-  
2 ents with respect to the case information  
3 of a child, any changes to a case, perma-  
4 nency plans, requirements to maintain pa-  
5 rental rights, and any efforts to terminate  
6 parental rights;

7 “(iii) appropriate opportunities for in-  
8 carcerated parents to demonstrate their re-  
9 lationship with a covered foster child given  
10 their incarceration, including training and  
11 courses required for a service plan; and

12 “(iv) the enhanced visitation described  
13 in paragraph (2).

14 “(B) For correctional facilities, fostering  
15 visitation and communication that is develop-  
16 mentally appropriate in terms of—

17 “(i) the nature of communication and  
18 visitation, including—

19 “(I) the ability to physically  
20 touch parents;

21 “(II) engaging with parents in lo-  
22 cations that are appropriate for the  
23 age and development of the child;

24 “(III) exchanging items that are  
25 appropriate to the age and develop-

1                   ment of the child, include expectations  
2                   that are appropriate for the age and  
3                   development of the child related to be-  
4                   havior, attire, and wait times; and

5                   “(IV) allowing appropriate adults  
6                   to bring children if legal guardians  
7                   are not available to promote regular  
8                   contact;

9                   “(ii) reasonable inclusion of all chil-  
10                  dren of the parent;

11                  “(iii) communication and visitation at  
12                  times when the children are available;

13                  “(iv) security procedures to comfort  
14                  children and be minimally invasive; and

15                  “(v) promoting parent-child relation-  
16                  ships regardless of the sentence imposed  
17                  on the parent.

18                  “(2) ENHANCED VISITATION.—

19                  “(A) Grantees shall facilitate weekly com-  
20                  munication and, for at least 9 days each year,  
21                  in-person visitation between a covered foster  
22                  child and any incarcerated parent of the child.

23                  “(B) Electronic visitation (such as live  
24                  video visits, phone calls, and recorded books)  
25                  may be used but shall not be the sole method

1 to promote a meaningful relationship for pur-  
2 poses of the grant.

3 “(C) Enhanced visitation programs shall—

4 “(i) integrate best practices for visita-  
5 tion programs with incarcerated parents  
6 and their children;

7 “(ii) adopt developmentally appro-  
8 priate visitation policies and procedures  
9 such as those described in paragraph  
10 (1)(B);

11 “(iii) reduce or eliminate the cost of  
12 developmentally appropriate communica-  
13 tion and visitation for the covered foster  
14 child, which may include the purchase of  
15 communication technology, covering trans-  
16 portation, insurance, and lodging costs,  
17 costs related to providing appropriate visi-  
18 tation spaces and activities, and other rel-  
19 evant costs;

20 “(iv) to the extent practicable, inte-  
21 grate appropriate parenting education to  
22 help prepare and process visits; and

23 “(v) avoid restricting visitation and  
24 communication as a punishment for the in-  
25 carcerated parents.

1           “(3) TRAINING.—Grantees shall incorporate on-  
2           going training for child welfare workers, correctional  
3           facility staff, and other program providers to under-  
4           stand the importance of promoting meaningful rela-  
5           tionships between children and incarcerated parents.

6           “(4) CASE MANAGEMENT.—Grantees shall pro-  
7           vide case management services for the incarcerated  
8           parents of a covered foster child to promote the rela-  
9           tionship, access to services, and coordination with  
10          the caseworkers of the covered foster child to  
11          strengthen the relationship.

12          “(5) LEGAL ASSISTANCE.—Grantees shall facili-  
13          tate access to necessary legal services and may use  
14          grant funds for services that are not reimbursable  
15          under other Federal programs.

16          “(e) FEDERAL SHARE.—The Federal share of the  
17          cost of any activity carried out using a grant made under  
18          this section shall be not greater than 75 percent.

19          “(f) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, EVALUATIONS, AND  
20          REPORTS.—

21                 “(1) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary  
22                 shall provide technical assistance with respect to  
23                 grants under this section, including by—

24                         “(A) assisting grantees in understanding  
25                         best practices in promoting meaningful relation-

1           ships between incarcerated parents and their  
2           children as well as consulting with appropriate  
3           stakeholders when developing their programs;

4                   “(B) assisting grantees with establishing  
5           and analyzing implementation and performance  
6           indicators; and

7                   “(C) conducting an annual technical assist-  
8           ance and training meeting and an annual grant-  
9           ee meeting so that grantees can learn from the  
10          experiences of other grantees.

11          “(2) EVALUATIONS.—The Secretary shall con-  
12          duct an evaluation of program outcomes, including  
13          with respect to parent and child well-being, parent-  
14          child interactions, parental involvement, awareness  
15          of child development and parenting practices, place-  
16          ment stability, and termination of parental rights  
17          with respect to covered foster children and incarcer-  
18          ated parents, to measure program effectiveness, as  
19          determined by the Secretary, and identify opportuni-  
20          ties for improved program practices and implemen-  
21          tation.

22          “(3) REPORTS TO THE CONGRESS.—

23                   “(A) INITIAL REPORT.—Not later than 3  
24          years after the date of the enactment of this  
25          section, the Secretary shall submit to the Com-

1           mittee on Ways and Means of the House of  
2           Representatives and the Committee on Finance  
3           of the Senate a report that includes—

4                   “(i) the number of applications for  
5                   grants under this section;

6                   “(ii) the number of grants awarded,  
7                   and the amounts for each grant; and

8                   “(iii) information on the grants, in-  
9                   cluding—

10                           “(I) interim results of the evalua-  
11                           tion described in paragraph (2);

12                           “(II) disaggregated data on cov-  
13                           ered foster children and incarcerated  
14                           parents;

15                           “(III) information on the com-  
16                           position of eligible State partnerships;

17                           “(IV) best practices for facili-  
18                           tating meaningful relationships be-  
19                           tween covered foster children and in-  
20                           carcerated parents; and

21                           “(V) barriers to implementation  
22                           or expansion of programs funded  
23                           under this section.

24                           “(B) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than 6  
25                           years after the date of the enactment of this

1 section, the Secretary shall submit to the Com-  
2 mittee on Ways and Means of the House of  
3 Representatives and the Committee on Finance  
4 of the Senate a report that includes—

5 “(i) the final results of the evaluation  
6 described in paragraph (2); and

7 “(ii) recommendations for refinements  
8 to grant requirements to improve program  
9 outcomes.

10 “(g) AUTHORITY OF SECRETARY WITH RESPECT TO  
11 INDIAN TRIBES AND TRIBAL ORGANIZATIONS.—

12 “(1) WAIVER OR MODIFICATION OF REQUIRE-  
13 MENTS.—In making a grant to an Indian tribe or  
14 tribal organization under this section, the Secretary  
15 may waive the matching requirement of subsection  
16 (e) or modify an application requirement imposed by  
17 or under subsection (c) if the Secretary determines  
18 that the waiver or modification is appropriate to the  
19 needs, culture, and circumstances of the Indian tribe  
20 or tribal organization.

21 “(2) EVALUATION.—The Secretary shall use  
22 tribally relevant data in carrying out the evaluation  
23 under subsection (f)(2) with respect to an Indian  
24 tribe or tribal organization.

1       “(h) LIMITATIONS ON AUTHORIZATION OF APPRO-  
2 PRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the  
3 Secretary not more than \$35,000,000 for each of fiscal  
4 years 2026 through 2029 to carry out this section.

5       “(i) DEFINITION OF COVERED FOSTER CHILD.—In  
6 this section, the term ‘covered foster child’ means a child  
7 that—

8               “(1) is in foster care; and

9               “(2) has at least 1 parent incarcerated in a  
10 Federal, State, or local correctional facility.”.

11       (b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

12               (1) Section 431(a)(2)(B)(vii) (42 U.S.C.  
13 629a(a)(2)(B)(vii)) is amended by striking “(as de-  
14 fined in section 439(b)(2))”.

15               (2) Section 431(a) (42 U.S.C. 629a(a)), as  
16 amended by sections 7(b)(2) and 11(a)(4) of this  
17 Act, is amended by adding at the end the following:

18               “(12) MENTORING.—The term ‘mentoring’  
19 means a structured, managed program in which chil-  
20 dren are appropriately matched with screened and  
21 trained adult volunteers for one on-one relationships,  
22 involving meetings and activities on a regular basis,  
23 intended to meet, in part, the child’s need for in-  
24 volvement with a caring and supportive adult who  
25 provides a positive role model.”.



1 **SEC. 15. GUIDANCE TO STATES ON IMPROVING DATA COL-**  
2 **LECTION AND REPORTING FOR YOUTH IN**  
3 **RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT PROGRAMS.**

4 Within 2 years after the date of the enactment of this  
5 Act, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in con-  
6 sultation with the Department of Education, the Adminis-  
7 tration for Children and Families, the Centers for Medi-  
8 care and Medicaid Services, the Administration for Com-  
9 munity Living, the Department of Justice, and other rel-  
10 evant policy experts, as determined by the Secretary, shall  
11 issue and disseminate, or update and revise, as applicable,  
12 guidance to State agencies in administering State plans  
13 approved under parts B and E of title IV of the Social  
14 Security Act on the following:

15 (1) Best practices for Federal and State agen-  
16 cies to collect data and share information related to  
17 the well-being of youth residing in residential treat-  
18 ment facilities, including those facilities operating in  
19 multiple States or serving out-of-state youth.

20 (2) Best practices on improving State collection  
21 and sharing of data related to incidences of mal-  
22 treatment of youth residing in residential treatment  
23 facilities, including with respect to meeting the re-  
24 quirement of section 471(a)(9)(A) of such Act for  
25 such youth in foster care.

1           (3) Best practices on improving oversight of  
2           youth residential programs receiving Federal fund-  
3           ing, and research-based strategies for risk assess-  
4           ment related to the health, safety, and well-being of  
5           youth in the facilities.

6 **SEC. 16. STREAMLINING RESEARCH, TRAINING, AND TECH-**  
7 **NICAL ASSISTANCE FUNDING.**

8           (a) REPURPOSING DISCRETIONARY RESEARCH SET-  
9           ASIDE.—Section 435(c) (42 U.S.C. 629e(c)) is amended  
10          to read as follows:

11          “(c) EVALUATION, RESEARCH, AND TECHNICAL AS-  
12          SISTANCE WITH RESPECT TO TARGETED PROGRAM RE-  
13          SOURCES.—Of the amount reserved under section  
14          437(b)(1) for a fiscal year, the Secretary shall use not less  
15          than—

16                 “(1) \$1,000,000 for technical assistance to  
17                 grantees under section 437(f) and to support design  
18                 of local site evaluations with the goal of publishing  
19                 and submitting evaluation findings to the clearing-  
20                 house established under section 476(d), or to award  
21                 grants to allow current or former grantees under  
22                 section 437(f) to analyze, publish, and submit to the  
23                 clearinghouse data collected during past grants; and

24                 “(2) \$1,000,000 for technical assistance re-  
25                 quired under section 429B of this Act to support ef-

1       fective implementation of the Indian Child Welfare  
2       Act of 1978 and to support development of associ-  
3       ated State plan measures described pursuant to sec-  
4       tion 422(b)(9) of this Act.”.

5       (b) ELIMINATION OF RESEARCH SET-ASIDE FROM  
6 MANDATORY FUNDS.—

7           (1) IN GENERAL.—Section 436(b) (42 U.S.C.  
8       629f(b)), as amended by the preceding provisions of  
9       this Act, is amended by striking paragraph (1) and  
10      redesignating paragraphs (2) through (5) as para-  
11      graphs (1) through (4), respectively.

12          (2) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

13           (A) Section 433(a) (42 U.S.C. 629c(a)) is  
14      amended by striking “436(b)(3)” and inserting  
15      “436(b)(2)”.

16           (B) Section 433(e) (42 U.S.C. 629c(e)), as  
17      amended by section 13(b) of this Act, is amend-  
18      ed by striking “436(b)(4)(A)” and inserting  
19      “436(b)(3)(A)” each place it appears.

20           (C) Section 434(a)(2)(A) (42 U.S.C.  
21      629d(a)(2)(A)) is amended by striking  
22      “436(b)(4)(B)” and inserting “436(b)(3)(B)”.

23           (D) Section 437(b)(1) (42 U.S.C.  
24      629g(b)(1)) is amended by striking “436(b)(1)”  
25      and inserting “435”.

1                   (E) Section 437(f)(3) (42 U.S.C.  
2                   629g(f)(3)) is amended by striking “436(b)(5)”  
3                   and inserting “436(b)(4)”.

4                   (F) Section 438(c) (42 U.S.C. 629g(c)) is  
5                   amended in each of paragraphs (1) through (3)  
6                   is amended by striking “436(b)(2)” and insert-  
7                   ing “436(b)(1)”.

8 **SEC. 17. REPORT ON POST ADOPTION AND SUBSIDIZED**  
9                   **GUARDIANSHIP SERVICES.**

10           (a) IN GENERAL.—Within 2 years after the date of  
11 the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Health and  
12 Human Services shall prepare and submit to the Com-  
13 mittee on Ways and Means of the House of Representa-  
14 tives and the Committee on Finance of the Senate a report  
15 on children who enter into foster care under the super-  
16 vision of a State administering a plan approved under part  
17 B or E of title IV of the Social Security Act after finaliza-  
18 tion of an adoption or legal guardianship.

19           (b) INFORMATION.—The Secretary shall include in  
20 the report information, to the extent available through the  
21 Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System  
22 and other data sources, regarding the incidence of adop-  
23 tion disruption and dissolution affecting children described  
24 in subsection (a) and factors associated with such cir-  
25 cumstances, including—

1 (1) whether affected individuals received pre- or  
2 post-legal adoption services; and

3 (2) other relevant information, such as the age  
4 of the child involved.

5 (c) POST-ADOPTION SERVICES AND GUARDIAN-  
6 SHIP.—The Secretary shall include in the report—

7 (1) a summary of post-adoption services and  
8 guardianship in each State that are available to fam-  
9 ilies that adopted children from foster care and the  
10 extent to which the services are evidence-based or  
11 evidence-informed.

12 (2) a summary of funding and funding sources  
13 for the services in each State, including set-asides  
14 under the Promoting Safe and Stable Families pro-  
15 gram.

16 **SEC. 18. EFFECTIVE DATE.**

17 (a) IN GENERAL.—The amendments made by this  
18 Act shall take effect on October 1, 2025, and shall apply  
19 to payments under part B of title IV of the Social Security  
20 Act for calendar quarters beginning on or after such date.

21 (b) DELAY PERMITTED IF STATE LEGISLATION RE-  
22 QUIRED.—If the Secretary of Health and Human Services  
23 determines that State legislation (other than legislation  
24 appropriating funds) is required in order for a State plan  
25 developed pursuant to part B of title IV of the Social Se-

1 curity Act to meet the additional requirements imposed  
2 by the amendments made by this Act, the plan shall not  
3 be regarded as failing to meet any of the additional re-  
4 quirements before the 1st day of the 1st calendar quarter  
5 beginning after the first regular session of the State legis-  
6 lature that begins after the date of the enactment of this  
7 Act. For purposes of the preceding sentence, if the State  
8 has a 2-year legislative session, each year of the session  
9 is deemed to be a separate regular session of the State  
10 legislature.

11 (c) APPLICATION TO PROGRAMS OPERATED BY IN-  
12 DIAN TRIBAL ORGANIZATIONS.—In the case of an Indian  
13 tribe, tribal organization, or tribal consortium that the  
14 Secretary of Health and Human Services determines re-  
15 quires time to take action necessary to comply with the  
16 additional requirements imposed by the amendments made  
17 by this Act (whether the tribe, organization, or tribal con-  
18 sortium has a plan under section 479B of the Social Secu-  
19 rity Act or a cooperative agreement or contract entered  
20 into with a State), the Secretary shall provide the tribe,  
21 organization, or tribal consortium with such additional  
22 time as the Secretary determines is necessary for the tribe,  
23 organization, or tribal consortium to take the action to  
24 comply with the additional requirements before being re-  
25 garded as failing to comply with the requirements.