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Supervisors Call on Congress and President to Authorize Conference on Children and Youth

SAN JOSE-CALIF.—Today County of Santa Clara Board of Supervisors adopted a resolution calling on Congress to authorize the President of the United States to convene a White House Conference on Children and Youth in 2010. The event will focus on issues related to child welfare. The Board's action will support current legislation (H.R. 5461 and S. 2771) to authorize the President to convene this conference.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, from an estimated 3,000,000 reports of child abuse and neglect in the United States every year, nearly 900,000 children are substantiated as abused and neglected. More than a 500,000 children and youth are in foster care. While 50,000 children are adopted from the public child welfare system each year, more than 117,000 are waiting to be adopted.

"We just cannot gamble with the wellbeing of our youngsters," said Supervisor Blanca Alvarado, Vice Chair of County of Santa Clara Board of Supervisors. "Our local child welfare system is directly impacted by decisions made at the federal level. We need a comprehensive federal discussion to address pressing issues that lead to improvements that make sense in the medium and long term."

The Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) is calling on Congress to reconvene the White House Conference on Children and Youth, which started in 1909, and continued every ten years, until the last time it was last held in 1970. The purpose of the Conference would be to encourage improvements in each state and local child welfare system, and to develop recommendations for actions to improve federal, state, and local programs.

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Congress would also be asked to appropriate funding to establish a series of events and small conferences through the 50 states in the year before the national conference. In 2010, delegates from each state (including the tribes, territories, and Washington, DC) would participate in the White House Conference.

“By supporting this Conference we are committing to participate in a national effort to improve the opportunities for youth in need,” said Supervisor Ken Yeager, Chair of the Children, Seniors and Families Committee. “This is an issue that demands not only our attention, but timely responses and actions.”

According to the CWLA, “A White House conference would examine the greatest needs, set forth recommended legislative fixes to Congress, and establish a plan to set the country on a path of reform. The commitment of the President and the power of the White House are needed to -- once again -- make vulnerable children a national priority and point the way to significant reform and improvements.”

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