

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 9076

To reauthorize and modernize part B of title IV of the Social Security Act to strengthen child welfare services, expand the availability of prevention services to better meet the needs of vulnerable families, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 22, 2024

Mr. LAHOOD (for himself and Mr. DAVIS of Illinois) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Ways and Means

A BILL

To reauthorize and modernize part B of title IV of the Social Security Act to strengthen child welfare services, expand the availability of prevention services to better meet the needs of vulnerable families, 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; REFERENCES.**

4 (a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the
5 “Protecting America’s Children by Strengthening Fami-
6 lies Act”.

1 (b) REFERENCES.—Except as otherwise expressly
 2 provided, wherever in this Act an amendment or repeal
 3 is expressed in terms of an amendment to, or repeal of,
 4 a section or other provision, the reference shall be consid-
 5 ered to be made to that section or other provision of the
 6 Social Security Act.

7 **SEC. 2. TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

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

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

9 **SEC. 3. REAUTHORIZATION OF CHILD WELFARE PRO-**
 10 **GRAMS.**

11 (a) REAUTHORIZATION OF SUBPART 1; DISCRE-
 12 TIONARY FUNDING.—Section 425 (42 U.S.C. 625) is
 13 amended by striking “2017 through 2023” and inserting
 14 “2025 through 2029”.

15 (b) REAUTHORIZATION OF SUBPART 2; ENHANCED
 16 SUPPORT.—Section 436(a) (42 U.S.C. 629f(a)) is amend-

1 ed by striking “each of fiscal years 2017 through 2023”
2 and inserting “fiscal year 2025 and \$420,000,000 for
3 each of fiscal years 2026 through 2029”.

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

8 (d) FUNDING LIMITATION.—Section 423(a)(2)(A)
9 (42 U.S.C. 623(a)(2)(A)) is amended by inserting “, not
10 to exceed \$10,000,000” before the semicolon.

11 **SEC. 4. ENHANCEMENTS TO THE COURT IMPROVEMENT**
12 **PROGRAM.**

13 (a) INCREASE IN RESERVATION OF FUNDS.—Section
14 436(b)(2) (42 U.S.C. 629f(b)(2)) is amended by inserting
15 “for fiscal year 2025 and \$40,000,000 for fiscal year 2026
16 and each succeeding fiscal year” before “for grants”.

17 (b) EXTENSION OF STATE MATCH REQUIREMENT.—
18 Section 438(d) (42 U.S.C. 629h(d)) is amended by strik-
19 ing “2017 through 2023” and inserting “2025 through
20 2029”.

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

23 (1) in paragraph (1), by adding at the end the
24 following:

1 “(F) that determine the appropriateness
2 and best practices for use of technology to con-
3 duct remote hearings, subject to participant
4 consent, including to ensure maximum partici-
5 pation of individuals involved in proceedings
6 and to enable courts to maintain operations in
7 times of public health or other emergencies;”;

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

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

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

17 “(A) support for technology that allows
18 court proceedings to occur remotely, including
19 hearings and legal representation;

20 “(B) the development of guidance and pro-
21 tocols for responding to the occurrences and co-
22 ordinating with other agencies; and

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

1 (d) IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE ON SHARING BEST
2 PRACTICES FOR TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGES NEEDED FOR
3 REMOTE COURT PROCEEDINGS FOR FOSTER CARE OR
4 ADOPTION.—Section 438 (42 U.S.C. 629h) is amended by
5 adding at the end the following:

6 “(e) GUIDANCE.—

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

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

15 “(B) the manner in which the proceedings
16 should be conducted.

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

21 “(3) ADDITIONAL CONSULTATION.—The Sec-
22 retary shall consult with Indian tribes on the devel-
23 opment of appropriate guidelines for State court
24 proceedings involving Indian children to maximize
25 engagement of Indian tribes and provide appropriate

1 guidelines on conducting State court proceedings
2 subject to the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (25
3 U.S.C. 1901 et seq.).”.

4 **SEC. 5. EXPANDING REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP GRANTS TO**
5 **ADDRESS PARENTAL SUBSTANCE USE DIS-**
6 **ORDER AS CAUSE OF CHILD REMOVAL.**

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

12 (b) REAUTHORIZATION.—Section 437(f) (42 U.S.C.
13 629g(f)) is amended—

14 (1) in paragraph (3)(A)—

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

18 (B) by striking “2017 through 2023” and
19 inserting “2025 through 2029”; and

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

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

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

3 “(iii) SUFFICIENT PLANNING.—

4 “(I) IN GENERAL.—A”; and

5 (2) by striking “may not exceed \$250,000,
6 and”; and

7 (3) by adding after and below the end the fol-
8 lowing:

9 “(II) EXCEPTION.—The Sec-

10 retary, on a case-by-case basis, may

11 waive the planning phase for a part-

12 nership that demonstrates that the

13 partnership has engaged in sufficient

14 planning before submitting an appli-

15 cation for a grant under this sub-

16 section.”.

17 (d) EXPANDING AVAILABILITY OF EVIDENCE-BASED
18 SERVICES.—

19 (1) IN GENERAL.—Section 437(f)(1) (42 U.S.C.

20 629g(f)(1)) is amended by inserting “, and expand

21 the scope of the evidence-based services that may be

22 approved by the clearinghouse established under sec-

23 tion 476(d)” before the period.

1 (2) CONSIDERATIONS FOR AWARDING
2 GRANTS.—Section 437(f)(7) (42 U.S.C. 629g(f)(7))
3 is amended—

4 (A) by striking “and” at the end of sub-
5 paragraph (D);

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

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

9 “(F) have submitted information pursuant
10 to paragraph (4)(F) that demonstrates the ca-
11 pability to participate in rigorous evaluation of
12 program effectiveness.”.

13 (e) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ON USING REGIONAL
14 PARTNERSHIP GRANT FUNDS IN COORDINATION WITH
15 OTHER FEDERAL FUNDS TO BETTER SERVE FAMILIES
16 AFFECTED BY A SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER.—Section
17 435(d) (42 U.S.C. 629e(d)) is amended—

18 (1) by striking “and” at the end of paragraph
19 (4);

20 (2) by striking the period at the end of para-
21 graph (5); and

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

23 “(6) use grants under section 437(f) in coordi-
24 nation with other Federal funds to better serve fami-

1 lies in the child welfare system that are affected by
2 a substance use disorder.”.

3 (f) PERFORMANCE INDICATORS.—Section
4 437(f)(8)(A) (42 U.S.C. 629g(f)(8)(A)) is amended in the
5 1st sentence—

6 (1) by striking “this subsection” and inserting
7 “the Protecting America’s Children by Strengthening Families Act”;

8 (2) by inserting “child permanency, reunification, re-entry into care,” before “parental recovery”;
9
10
11 and

12 (3) by inserting “, and access to services for
13 families with substance use disorder, including those
14 with children who are overrepresented in foster care,
15 difficult to place, or have disproportionately low permanency rates” before the period.

17 (g) PERFORMANCE INDICATOR CONSULTATION REQUIRED.—Section
18 437(f)(8)(B) (42 U.S.C.
19 629g(f)(8)(B)) is amended by redesignating clause (iii) as
20 clause (iv) and inserting after clause (ii) the following:

21 “(iii) The Administrator of the National Institute on Drug Abuse.”.

23 (h) REPORTS TO CONGRESS.—Section 437(f)(9)(B)
24 (42 U.S.C. 629g(f)(9)(B)) is amended—

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

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

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

4 “(iv) whether any programs funded by
5 the grants were submitted to the clearing-
6 house established under section 476(d) for
7 review and the results of any such re-
8 view.”.

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

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

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

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

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

20 (j) ADDITION OF JUVENILE COURT AS REQUIRED
21 PARTNER.—Section 437(f)(2)(A) (42 U.S.C.
22 629g(f)(2)(A)) is amended by adding at the end the fol-
23 lowing:

24 “(iii) The most appropriate adminis-
25 trative office of the juvenile court or State

1 court overseeing court proceedings involv-
2 ing families who come to the attention of
3 the court due to child abuse or neglect.”.

4 (k) ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL PARTNER.—Section
5 437(f)(2)(C) (42 U.S.C. 629g(f)(2)(C)) is amended by re-
6 designating clause (ix) as clause (x) and inserting after
7 clause (viii) the following:

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

11 (l) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

12 (1) Section 437(f)(2)(D) (42 U.S.C.
13 629g(f)(2)(D)) is amended—

14 (A) by adding “and” at the end of clause
15 (i);

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

18 (C) by striking clause (iii).

19 (2) Section 437(f)(2) (42 U.S.C. 629g(f)(2)) is
20 amended by striking subparagraph (B) and redesign-
21 ating subparagraphs (C) and (D) as subparagraphs
22 (B) and (C), respectively.

1 **SEC. 6. MODERNIZATION; REDUCING ADMINISTRATIVE**
2 **BURDEN.**

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

5 “(c) USE OF TECHNOLOGY.—

6 “(1) USE OF PORTAL.—The services referred to
7 in subsection (a) may include the means of access to
8 and use of an electronic or digital portal to facilitate
9 the provision of community support to care for and
10 meet specific needs of families and children.

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

15 (b) ALLOWING SUPPORT FOR FAMILY RESOURCE
16 CENTERS.—Section 431(a) (42 U.S.C. 629a(a)) is amend-
17 ed—

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

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

22 “(10) FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER.—

23 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The term ‘family re-
24 source center’ means a community or school-
25 based hub of support services for families
26 that—

1 “(i) utilizes an approach that is multi-
2 generational, strengths-based, and family-
3 centered;

4 “(ii) reflects, and is responsive to,
5 community needs and interests;

6 “(iii) provides support at no or low
7 cost for participants; and

8 “(iv) builds communities of peer sup-
9 port for families, including kinship fami-
10 lies, to develop social connections that re-
11 duce isolation and stress.

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

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

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

4 (d) ACCESS TO LEGAL REPRESENTATION.—Section
5 422(b)(4) (42 U.S.C. 622(b)(4)) is amended—

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

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

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

11 “(C) the steps that the State will take to
12 ensure that, with respect to any judicial pro-
13 ceeding involving a child and in which there is
14 an allegation of child abuse or neglect, includ-
15 ing a proceeding on dependency, adoption,
16 guardianship, or termination of parental rights,
17 information about available independent legal
18 representation is provided to—

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

20 “(ii) any individual who is a parent or
21 guardian, or has legal custody, of the
22 child.”.

23 (e) SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-
24 BEING OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE.—Section
25 422(b)(15)(A) (42 U.S.C. 622(b)(15)) is amended—

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

17 (f) REDUCTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN.—

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

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

23 **“(a) IN GENERAL.—**The Secretary shall reduce the
24 burden of administering this part imposed on the recipi-
25 ents of funds under this part, by—

1 “(1) reviewing and revising administrative data
2 collection instruments and forms to eliminate dupli-
3 cation and streamline reporting requirements for the
4 recipients while collecting all data required under
5 this part;

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

13 “(3) collecting input from the recipients with
14 respect to fiscal and oversight requirements and
15 making changes to ensure consistency with stand-
16 ards and guidelines for other Federal formula grant
17 programs based on the input; and

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

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

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

2 “The Secretary shall—

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

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

9 “(3) make the State plans available on a public
10 website; and

11 “(4) include on the website aggregated national
12 summaries of State submissions as the Secretary
13 deems appropriate.”.

14 (2) IMPLEMENTATION.—Within 2 years after
15 the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary
16 of Health and Human Services shall—

17 (A) comply with section 441 of the Social
18 Security Act, as added by the amendment made
19 by paragraph (1); and

20 (B) notify each recipient of funds under
21 part B of title IV of the Social Security Act of
22 any change made by the Secretary pursuant to
23 such section affecting the recipient.

24 (3) REPORT.—Within 3 years after the date of
25 the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Health
26 and Human Services shall submit to the Committee

1 on Ways and Means of the House of Representatives
2 and the Committee on Finance of the Senate a re-
3 port describing the efforts of the Secretary to com-
4 ply with section 441 of the Social Security Act, as
5 added by the amendment made by paragraph (1), in-
6 cluding the specific actions to comply with each
7 paragraph of such section.

8 (g) PRIMARY PREVENTION PARTNERS.—Section
9 435(a)(2)(B) (42 U.S.C. 429e(a)(2)(B)) is amended by in-
10 serting “including community-based partners with exper-
11 tise in preventing unnecessary child welfare system in-
12 volvement” before the semicolon.

13 **SEC. 7. STREAMLINING FUNDING FOR INDIAN TRIBES.**

14 (a) SUBPART 1.—

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

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

20 “(a) RESERVATION OF FUNDS; DIRECT PAY-
21 MENTS.—Out of any amount appropriated pursuant to
22 section 425 for a fiscal year, the Secretary shall reserve
23 3 percent for grants to Indian tribes and tribal organiza-
24 tions, which shall be paid directly to Indian tribes and

1 tribal organizations with a plan approved under this sub-
2 part, in accordance with section 433(a).”.

3 (B) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section
4 423(a) (42 U.S.C. 623(a)) is amended by strik-
5 ing “the sum appropriated pursuant to section
6 425 for each fiscal year” and inserting “for
7 each fiscal year, the sum appropriated pursuant
8 to section 425 remaining after applying section
9 428(a)”.

10 (C) TECHNICAL AMENDMENT.—Section
11 428(c) (42 U.S.C. 628(c)) is amended by strik-
12 ing “450b” and inserting “5304”.

13 (2) IMPROVING COMPLIANCE WITH THE INDIAN
14 CHILD WELFARE ACT.—

15 (A) STATE PLAN REQUIREMENT.—Section
16 422(b)(9) (42 U.S.C. 622(b)(9)) is amended by
17 striking “Act;” and inserting “Act of 1978, in-
18 cluding how the State will ensure timely notice
19 to tribal organizations of State custody pro-
20 ceedings involving Indian children, foster care
21 or adoptive placements of Indian children, and
22 case recordkeeping as such matters relate to
23 transfers of jurisdiction, termination of parental
24 rights, and active efforts;”.

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

4 **“SEC. 429B. EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INDIAN**
5 **CHILD WELFARE ACT OF 1978.**

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

17 “(1) Timely identification of Indian children
18 and extended family members.

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

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

1 “(4) In cases in which a State court orders a
2 foster care placement of an Indian child, whether re-
3 quirements for active efforts to prevent the breakup
4 of the Indian family, testimony of a qualified expert
5 witness, and evidentiary standards were met.

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

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

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

24 “(c) BIENNIAL REPORTS TO CONGRESS.—The Sec-
25 retary shall biennially submit to the Committee on Ways

1 and Means of the House of Representatives and the Com-
2 mittee on Finance of the Senate a written report on how—

3 “(1) the States are complying with the Indian
4 Child Welfare Act of 1978, as required by section
5 422(b)(9) of this Act and by data collected under
6 section 429B of this Act; and

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

11 (3) REPORTING REQUIREMENTS; ADMINISTRA-
12 TIVE COSTS.—

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

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

1 administrative burden on any tribe to which less than
2 \$50,000 is allotted under this subpart for the fiscal year.

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

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

16 (b) SUBPART 2.—

17 (1) TRIBAL PLAN EXEMPTION.—Section
18 432(b)(2)(B) (42 U.S.C. 629b(b)(2)(B)) is amend-
19 ed—

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

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

1 (2) APPLICATION OF TRIBAL SET-ASIDE BE-
2 FORE OTHER SET-ASIDES.—Section 436(b)(3) (42
3 U.S.C. 429f(b)(3)) is amended by striking “After
4 applying paragraphs (4) and (5) (but before apply-
5 ing paragraphs (1) or (2)), the” and inserting
6 “The”.

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

12 **SEC. 8. ACCELERATING ACCESS TO FAMILY FIRST PREVEN-**
13 **TION SERVICES.**

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

16 “(f) PREVENTION SERVICES EVALUATION PARTNER-
17 SHIPS.—

18 “(1) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this subsection
19 is to authorize the Secretary to make competitive
20 grants to support the timely evaluation of—

21 “(A) services and programs described in
22 section 471(e); or

23 “(B) kinship navigator programs described
24 in section 474(a)(7).

1 “(2) GRANTS.—In accordance with applications
2 approved under this subsection, the Secretary may
3 make grants, on a competitive basis, to eligible enti-
4 ties to carry out projects designed to evaluate a serv-
5 ice or program provided by the eligible entity, or an
6 entity in partnership with the eligible entity, with re-
7 spect to the requirements for a promising practice,
8 supported practice, or well-supported practice de-
9 scribed in section 471(e)(4)(C).

10 “(3) APPLICATIONS.—

11 “(A) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity may
12 apply to the Secretary for a grant under this
13 subsection to carry out a project that meets the
14 following requirements:

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

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

19 “(I) a State agency that admin-
20 isters, or supervises the administra-
21 tion of, the State plan approved under
22 part E, or an agency administering
23 the plan under the supervision of the
24 State agency; and

1 “(II) if the applicant is unable or
2 unwilling to do so, at least 1 external
3 evaluator to carry out the evaluation
4 of the service or program provided by
5 the applicant.

6 “(B) CONTENTS.—The application shall
7 contain the following:

8 “(i) A description of the project, in-
9 cluding—

10 “(I) a statement explaining why
11 a grant is necessary to carry out the
12 project; and

13 “(II) the amount of grant funds
14 that would be disbursed to each entity
15 described in subparagraph (A)(ii) in
16 partnership with the applicant.

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

1 “(iii) A certification from the appli-
2 cant that provides assurances that the ap-
3 plicant intends to comply with subpara-
4 graph (A)(ii)(II), if applicable.

5 “(iv) At the option of the eligible enti-
6 ty, a certification from the applicant that
7 the applicant requires an external eval-
8 uator secured by the Secretary pursuant to
9 paragraph (5), if applicable.

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

13 “(A) Addressing, with respect to the clear-
14 inghouse of practices described in section
15 476(d)(2), deficiencies or gaps identified by the
16 Secretary in consultation with—

17 “(i) States, political subdivisions of a
18 State, and tribal communities carrying out,
19 or receiving the benefits of, a service or
20 program; and

21 “(ii) child welfare experts, including
22 experts with lived experience.

23 “(B) Maximizing the number of evidence-
24 based services or programs to be included in the

1 clearinghouse of practices described in section
2 476(d)(2).

3 “(C) Timely completion of evaluations and
4 the production of evidence.

5 “(D) Supporting services or programs that
6 are based on, or are adaptations to new popu-
7 lation settings of, a service or program with re-
8 liable evidence about the benefits and risks of
9 the service or program.

10 “(5) AVAILABILITY OF EXTERNAL EVAL-
11 UATORS.—

12 “(A) IN GENERAL.—Before accepting ap-
13 plications under this subsection, the Secretary
14 shall make reasonable efforts to identify at least
15 1 entity to serve as an external evaluator for
16 any eligible entity that includes a certification
17 under paragraph (3)(B)(iv) with an application
18 under this subsection.

19 “(B) NO EFFECT ON CONSIDERATION OF
20 APPLICATION.—The Secretary may not consider
21 whether an eligible entity is in partnership with
22 an external evaluator described in paragraph
23 (A) in approving an application under this sub-
24 section submitted by the eligible entity.

25 “(6) REPORTS.—

1 “(A) BY GRANT RECIPIENTS.—Within 1
2 year after receiving a grant under this sub-
3 section, and every year thereafter for the next
4 5 years, the grant recipient shall submit to the
5 Secretary a written report on—

6 “(i) the use of grant funds;

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

11 “(I) how the program or service
12 is being carried out in accordance
13 with standards specified in the re-
14 quirement;

15 “(II) any outcomes of the pro-
16 gram or service; and

17 “(III) any outcome with respect
18 to which the service or program com-
19 pares favorably to a comparison prac-
20 tice; and

21 “(iii) whether the Secretary has in-
22 cluded the program or service in an update
23 to the clearinghouse of practices described
24 in section 476(d)(2).

1 “(B) BY THE SECRETARY.—The Secretary
2 shall submit to the Committee on Ways and
3 Means of the House of Representatives and to
4 the Committee on Finance of the Senate an an-
5 nual written report on—

6 “(i) the grants awarded under this
7 subsection;

8 “(ii) the programs funded by the
9 grants;

10 “(iii) any technical assistance pro-
11 vided by the Secretary in carrying out this
12 subsection, including with respect to the
13 efforts to secure external evaluators pursu-
14 ant to paragraph (5); and

15 “(iv) any efforts by the Secretary to
16 support program evaluation and review
17 pursuant to section 471(e) and inclusion of
18 programs in the pre-approved list of serv-
19 ices and programs described in section
20 471(e)(4)(D) or the clearinghouse of prac-
21 tices described in section 476(d)(2).

22 “(7) FUNDING.—

23 “(A) LIMITATIONS.—Of the amounts avail-
24 able to carry out this subsection, the Secretary

1 may use not more than 5 percent to provide
2 technical assistance.

3 “(B) CARRYOVER.—Amounts made avail-
4 able to carry out this subsection shall remain
5 available until expended.

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

7 “(A) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term ‘eligi-
8 ble entity’ means any of the following providing
9 a service or program or, in the sole determina-
10 tion of the Secretary, able to provide a service
11 or program if awarded a grant under this sub-
12 section:

13 “(i) A State, a political subdivision of
14 a State, or an agency or department of a
15 State or political subdivision of a State.

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

18 “(iii) An Indian tribe or tribal organi-
19 zation.

20 “(B) EXTERNAL EVALUATOR.—The term
21 ‘external evaluator’ means an entity with the
22 ability and willingness to evaluate a service or
23 program pursuant to paragraph (2) that is not
24 provided by the entity.

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

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

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

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

9 “(5) PREVENTIVE SERVICES EVALUATION
10 PARTNERSHIPS.—The Secretary shall reserve
11 \$5,000,000 for grants under section 435(f) for each
12 of fiscal years 2026 through 2029.”.

13 **SEC. 9. STRENGTHENING SUPPORT FOR YOUTH AGING OUT**
14 **OF FOSTER CARE.**

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

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

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

4 “(A) the plan was developed jointly by the
5 Secretary and the State, and the State, in de-
6 veloping the plan, consulted with—

7 “(i) appropriate public and nonprofit
8 private agencies;

9 “(ii) community-based organizations
10 involved in providing services for children
11 and families in the areas of family preser-
12 vation, family support, family reunifica-
13 tion, foster care, kinship, and adoption
14 promotion and support;

15 “(iii) parents with child welfare expe-
16 rience, foster parents, adoptive parents,
17 and kinship caregivers; and

18 “(iv) children, youth, and young
19 adults with experience in the child welfare
20 system, including State boards and coun-
21 cils comprised of youth with the experience
22 who represent the diversity of children in
23 the State to whom the plan would apply;
24 and

1 “(B) the State has made publicly acces-
 2 sible on a website of the State agency a report
 3 that outlines how the State has implemented
 4 the suggestions of the children and youth re-
 5 ferred to in subparagraph (A)(iv);”.

6 **SEC. 10. RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIVE**
 7 **AND KINSHIP CAREGIVERS.**

8 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 431(a) (42 U.S.C.
 9 629a(a)), as amended by section 6(b)(2) of this Act, is
 10 amended—

11 (1) in paragraph (1)—

12 (A) in the matter preceding subparagraph

13 (A)—

14 (i) by striking “children” and insert-
 15 ing “children, youth,”; and

16 (ii) by striking “adoptive and ex-
 17 tended” and inserting “kinship and adop-
 18 tive”;

19 (B) in subparagraph (D), by striking “par-
 20 ents and other caregivers (including foster par-
 21 ents)” and inserting “parents, kinship care-
 22 givers, and foster parents”;

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

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

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

4 “(G)(i) peer-to-peer mentoring and support
5 programs with demonstrated experience fos-
6 tering constructive relationships between chil-
7 dren and families and mentors with relevant
8 lived experience or interactions with the child
9 welfare system; and

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

20 (2) in paragraph (2)(B)—

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

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

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

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

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

7 (b) KINSHIP NAVIGATORS.—

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

10 (A) in the section heading, by striking
11 “**FAMILY CONNECTION GRANTS**” and insert-
12 ing “**KINSHIP NAVIGATORS**”;

13 (B) in subsection (a)—

14 (i) in the matter preceding paragraph
15 (1), by striking “helping” and inserting
16 “administering programs to help”;

17 (ii) by striking “of—” and all that
18 follows through “a kinship” and inserting
19 “of a kinship”;

20 (iii) in paragraph (1)(C)—

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

23 (II) by adding “and” at the end
24 of clause (iv); and

1 (III) by adding at the end the
2 following:

3 “(v) that include connections to indi-
4 vidualized assistance, as needed;”;

5 (iv) by striking paragraphs (2)
6 through (4);

7 (v) by redesignating subparagraphs
8 (A) through (G) of paragraph (1) as para-
9 graphs (1) through (7), respectively;

10 (vi) by redesignating clauses (i)
11 through (iv) and clause (v) (as added by
12 clause (iii)(III) of this subparagraph) as
13 subparagraphs (A) through (E), respec-
14 tively;

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

17 (viii) by striking “caregiving;” and in-
18 serting “caregiving.”;

19 (C) in subsection (b)—

20 (i) in paragraph (1), by striking “1 or
21 more of”;

22 (ii) by redesignating paragraphs (3)
23 and (4) as paragraphs (4) and (5), respec-
24 tively, and inserting after paragraph (2)
25 the following:

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

10 (iii) in paragraph (4) (as so redesign-
11 nated), by striking “and” at the end;

12 (iv) in paragraph (5) (as so redesign-
13 nated), by striking the period and inserting
14 “; and”; and

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

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

18 “(A) documentation of support from a rel-
19 evant community-based organization with expe-
20 rience serving kinship families when applicable;
21 or

22 “(B) a description of how the organization
23 plans to coordinate its services and activities
24 with those offered by the relevant community-
25 based organizations.”;

1 (D) by striking subsection (d) and insert-
2 ing the following:

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

7 (E) in subsection (g)—

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

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

12 (ii) by striking “subsection (h)” the
13 2nd place it appears and inserting “section
14 437(b)(6)”; and

15 (F) by striking subsection (h).

16 (2) RESERVATION OF DISCRETIONARY
17 FUNDS.—Section 437(b) (42 U.S.C. 629g(b)), as
18 amended by section 8(b) of this Act, is amended by
19 adding at the end the following:

20 “(6) KINSHIP NAVIGATORS.—The Secretary
21 shall reserve \$10,000,000 for grants under section
22 427 for each of fiscal years 2026 through 2029.”.

23 (3) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section
24 474(a)(7) (42 U.S.C. 674(a)(7)) is amended by
25 striking “427(a)(1)” and inserting “427(a)”.

1 **SEC. 11. AVOIDING NEGLECT BY ADDRESSING POVERTY.**

2 (a) FAMILY PRESERVATION SERVICES.—Section
3 431(a)(1) (42 U.S.C. 629a(a)(1)), as amended by section
4 10(a)(1) of this Act, is amended—

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

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

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

10 “(H)(i) services providing nonrecurring
11 short term benefits (including supports related
12 to housing instability, utilities, transportation,
13 and food assistance, among other basic needs)
14 that address immediate needs related to a spe-
15 cific crisis, situation, or event affecting the abil-
16 ity of a child to remain in a home established
17 for the child that is not intended to meet an on-
18 going need; and

19 “(ii) for purposes of this subpart, an ex-
20 penditure for a service described in clause (i)
21 may be treated as an expenditure for any 1 or
22 more of family support services, family preser-
23 vation services, family reunification services, or
24 adoption promotion and support services as
25 long as the expenditure is related to serving the
26 children and families in the specified category

1 and consistent with the overall purpose of the
2 category.”.

3 (b) STATE PLAN REQUIREMENTS.—Section 432(a)
4 (42 U.S.C. 629b(a)) is amended—

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

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

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

10 “(11) provides a description of policies in place,
11 including training for employees, to address child
12 welfare reports and investigations of neglect con-
13 cerning the living arrangements or subsistence needs
14 of a child with the goal to prevent the separation of
15 a child from a parent of the child solely due to pov-
16 erty, to ensure access to services described in section
17 431(a)(1)(H).”.

18 **SEC. 12. STRENGTHENING SUPPORT FOR CASEWORKERS.**

19 (a) REAUTHORIZATION OF, AND INCREASE IN FUND-
20 ING FOR, CASEWORKER VISITS.—Section 436(b)(4)(A)
21 (42 U.S.C. 629f(b)(4)(A)) is amended by striking “each
22 of fiscal years 2017 through 2023” and inserting “fiscal
23 year 2025 and \$26,000,000 for fiscal year 2026 and each
24 succeeding fiscal year”.

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

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

14 “(2) TERRITORIES.—From the amount reserved
15 pursuant to section 436(b)(4)(A) for any fiscal year
16 that remains after applying paragraph (1) of this
17 subsection for the fiscal year, the Secretary shall
18 allot to each jurisdiction specified in subsection (b)
19 of this section to which a base allotment is made
20 under such paragraph (1) an amount determined in
21 the same manner as the allotment to each of such
22 jurisdictions is determined under section 423 (with-
23 out regard to the initial allotment of \$70,000 to
24 each State).

1 “(3) OTHER STATES.—From the amount re-
2 served pursuant to section 436(b)(4)(A) for any fis-
3 cal year that remains after applying paragraphs (1)
4 and (2) of this subsection for the fiscal year, the
5 Secretary shall allot to each State (other than an In-
6 dian tribe) not specified in subsection (b) of this sec-
7 tion to which a base allotment was made under
8 paragraph (1) of this subsection an amount equal to
9 such remaining amount multiplied by the supple-
10 mental nutrition assistance program benefits per-
11 centage of the State (as defined in subsection (c)(2)
12 of this section) for the fiscal year, except that in ap-
13 plying subsection (c)(2)(A) of this section, ‘sub-
14 section (e)(3)’ shall be substituted for ‘such para-
15 graph (1)’.”.

16 (c) REQUIREMENT TO USE FUNDS TO IMPROVE
17 QUALITY OF CASEWORKER VISITS WITH FOSTER CHIL-
18 DREN.—Section 436(b)(4)(B)(i) (42 U.S.C.
19 629f(b)(4)(B)(i)) is amended to read as follows:

20 “(i) IN GENERAL.—A State to which
21 an amount is paid from amounts reserved
22 under subparagraph (A) shall use the
23 amount to improve the quality of monthly
24 caseworker visits with children who are in

1 foster care under the responsibility of the
2 State, with an emphasis on—

3 “(I) reducing caseload ratios and
4 the administrative burden on case-
5 workers, to improve caseworker deci-
6 sion making on the safety, perma-
7 nency, and well-being of foster chil-
8 dren and on activities designed to in-
9 crease retention, recruitment, and
10 training of caseworkers;

11 “(II) implementing technology
12 solutions to streamline caseworker du-
13 ties and modernize systems, ensuring
14 improved efficiency and effectiveness
15 in child welfare services;

16 “(III) improving caseworker safe-
17 ty;

18 “(IV) mental health resources to
19 support caseworker well-being, includ-
20 ing peer-to-peer support programs;
21 and

22 “(V) recruitment campaigns
23 aimed at attracting qualified case-
24 worker candidates.”.

1 (d) ELIMINATION OF COST-SHARE PENALTY TIED
2 TO MONTHLY CASEWORKER VISIT STANDARD.—Section
3 424(f) (42 U.S.C. 624(f)) is amended—

4 (1) by striking “(1)(A)”; and

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

6 **SEC. 13. DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS FOR IMPROVING RE-**
7 **LATIONSHIPS BETWEEN INCARCERATED**
8 **PARENTS AND CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE.**

9 Section 439 (42 U.S.C. 629i) is amended to read as
10 follows:

11 **“SEC. 439. STATE PARTNERSHIP PLANNING AND DEM-**
12 **ONSTRATION GRANTS TO SUPPORT MEAN-**
13 **INGFUL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN FOSTER**
14 **CHILDREN AND THE INCARCERATED PAR-**
15 **ENTS OF THE CHILDREN.**

16 “(a) AUTHORITY.—

17 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may make
18 demonstration grants to eligible State partnerships
19 to develop, implement, and provide support for pro-
20 grams that enable and sustain meaningful relation-
21 ships between covered foster children and the incar-
22 cerated parents of the children.

23 “(2) PAYMENT OF ANNUAL INSTALLMENTS.—

24 The Secretary shall pay each demonstration grant in
25 5 annual installments.

1 “(3) 1-YEAR PLANNING GRANTS.—The Sec-
2 retary may make a planning grant to a recipient of
3 a demonstration grant, to be paid to the recipient 1
4 year before payment of the 1st annual installment of
5 the demonstration grant and in an amount not
6 greater than any installment of the demonstration
7 grant, if—

8 “(A) the recipient includes a request for a
9 planning grant in the application under sub-
10 section (c); and

11 “(B) the Secretary determines that a plan-
12 ning grant would assist the recipient and im-
13 prove the effectiveness of the demonstration
14 grant.

15 “(b) ELIGIBLE STATE PARTNERSHIP DEFINED.—

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

19 “(A) The State child welfare agency re-
20 sponsible for the administration of the State
21 plans under this part.

22 “(B) The State agency responsible for
23 adult corrections.

24 “(2) ADDITIONAL PARTNERS.—For purposes of
25 this section, an eligible State partnership may in-

1 clude any entity with experience in serving incarcerated
2 ated parents and their children.

3 “(3) PARTNERSHIPS ENTERED INTO BY INDIAN
4 TRIBES OR TRIBAL CONSORTIA.—Notwithstanding
5 paragraph (1), if an Indian tribe or tribal consor-
6 tium enters into a partnership pursuant to this sec-
7 tion that does not consist solely of tribal child wel-
8 fare agencies (or a consortium of the agencies), the
9 partnership shall be considered an eligible State
10 partnership for purposes of this section.

11 “(c) APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS.—An eligible
12 State partnership seeking a demonstration grant under
13 this section to carry out a program described in subsection
14 (a)(1) shall submit an application to the Secretary at such
15 time, in such manner, and containing such information as
16 the Secretary may require. The application shall include
17 the following:

18 “(1) A summary of the program, including how
19 the program will support a meaningful relationship
20 between a covered foster child and an incarcerated
21 parent of the child.

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

1 “(3) A framework for identifying—

2 “(A) each covered foster child eligible for
3 services under the program, including, to the
4 extent practicable, coordination of data between
5 relevant State child welfare agencies and court
6 systems; and

7 “(B) the roles and responsibilities of the
8 entities in the partnership.

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

11 “(5) Assurances that the applicant will partici-
12 pate fully in the evaluation described in subsection
13 (f)(2) and shall maintain records for the program,
14 including demographic information disaggregated by
15 relevant characteristics with respect to covered foster
16 children and incarcerated parents who participate in
17 the program.

18 “(d) PROGRAM ACTIVITIES.—To the extent that the
19 activities are in the best interest of the covered foster
20 child, the activities referred to in subsection (c)(2) shall
21 include the following:

22 “(1) REVISION OF POLICIES.—Through con-
23 sultation with incarcerated parents and their fami-
24 lies, grantees shall promote organizational policies of
25 participating child welfare entities and collaborating

1 correctional facilities to promote meaningful rela-
2 tionships through regular and developmentally ap-
3 propriate communication and visitation between cov-
4 ered foster children and the incarcerated parents, in-
5 cluding, when appropriate, the following:

6 “(A) For child welfare entities—

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

9 “(ii) regular sharing of information
10 and responses to requests for information
11 between caseworkers and incarcerated par-
12 ents with respect to the case information
13 of a child, any changes to a case, perma-
14 nency plans, requirements to maintain pa-
15 rental rights, and any efforts to terminate
16 parental rights;

17 “(iii) appropriate opportunities for in-
18 carcerated parents to demonstrate their re-
19 lationship with a covered foster child given
20 their incarceration, including training and
21 courses required for a service plan; and

22 “(iv) the enhanced visitation described
23 in paragraph (2).

1 “(B) For correctional facilities, fostering
2 visitation and communication that is develop-
3 mentally appropriate in terms of—

4 “(i) the nature of communication and
5 visitation, including—

6 “(I) the ability to physically
7 touch parents;

8 “(II) engaging with parents in lo-
9 cations that are appropriate for the
10 age and development of the child;

11 “(III) exchanging items that are
12 appropriate to the age and develop-
13 ment of the child, include expectations
14 that are appropriate for the age and
15 development of the child related to be-
16 havior, attire, and wait times; and

17 “(IV) allowing appropriate adults
18 to bring children if legal guardians
19 are not available to promote regular
20 contact;

21 “(ii) reasonable inclusion of all chil-
22 dren of the parent;

23 “(iii) communication and visitation at
24 times when the children are available;

1 “(iv) security procedures to comfort
2 children and be minimally invasive; and

3 “(v) promoting parent-child relation-
4 ships regardless of the sentence imposed
5 on the parent.

6 “(2) ENHANCED VISITATION.—

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

11 “(B) Electronic visitation (such as live
12 video visits, phone calls, and recorded books)
13 may be used but shall not be the sole method
14 to promote a meaningful relationship for pur-
15 poses of the grant.

16 “(C) Enhanced visitation programs shall—

17 “(i) integrate best practices for visita-
18 tion programs with incarcerated parents
19 and their children;

20 “(ii) adopt developmentally appro-
21 priate visitation policies and procedures
22 such as those described in paragraph
23 (1)(B);

24 “(iii) reduce or eliminate the cost of
25 developmentally appropriate communica-

1 tion and visitation for the covered foster
2 child, which may include the purchase of
3 communication technology, covering trans-
4 portation, insurance, and lodging costs,
5 costs related to providing appropriate visi-
6 tation spaces and activities, and other rel-
7 evant costs;

8 “(iv) to the extent practicable, inte-
9 grate appropriate parenting education to
10 help prepare and process visits; and

11 “(v) avoid restricting visitation and
12 communication as a punishment for the in-
13 carcerated parents.

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

19 “(4) CASE MANAGEMENT.—Grantees shall pro-
20 vide case management services for the incarcerated
21 parents of a covered foster child to promote the rela-
22 tionship, access to services, and coordination with
23 the caseworkers of the covered foster child to
24 strengthen the relationship.

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

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

8 “(f) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, EVALUATIONS, AND
9 REPORTS.—

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

13 “(A) assisting grantees in understanding
14 best practices in promoting meaningful relation-
15 ships between incarcerated parents and their
16 children as well as consulting with appropriate
17 stakeholders when developing their programs;

18 “(B) assisting grantees with establishing
19 and analyzing implementation and performance
20 indicators; and

21 “(C) conducting an annual technical assist-
22 ance and training meeting and an annual grant-
23 ee meeting so that grantees can learn from the
24 experiences of other grantees.

1 “(2) EVALUATIONS.—The Secretary shall con-
2 duct an evaluation of program outcomes, including
3 with respect to parent and child well-being, parent-
4 child interactions, parental involvement, awareness
5 of child development and parenting practices, place-
6 ment stability, and termination of parental rights
7 with respect to covered foster children and incarcer-
8 ated parents, to measure program effectiveness, as
9 determined by the Secretary, and identify opportuni-
10 ties for improved program practices and implemen-
11 tation.

12 “(3) REPORTS TO THE CONGRESS.—

13 “(A) INITIAL REPORT.—Not later than 3
14 years after the date of the enactment of this
15 section, the Secretary shall submit to the Com-
16 mittee on Ways and Means of the House of
17 Representatives and the Committee on Finance
18 of the Senate a report that includes—

19 “(i) the number of applications for
20 grants under this section;

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

23 “(iii) information on the grants, in-
24 cluding—

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

3 “(II) disaggregated data on cov-
4 ered foster children and incarcerated
5 parents;

6 “(III) information on the com-
7 position of eligible State partnerships;

8 “(IV) best practices for facili-
9 tating meaningful relationships be-
10 tween covered foster children and in-
11 carcerated parents; and

12 “(V) barriers to implementation
13 or expansion of programs funded
14 under this section.

15 “(B) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than 6
16 years after the date of the enactment of this
17 section, the Secretary shall submit to the Com-
18 mittee on Ways and Means of the House of
19 Representatives and the Committee on Finance
20 of the Senate a report that includes—

21 “(i) the final results of the evaluation
22 described in paragraph (2); and

23 “(ii) recommendations for refinements
24 to grant requirements to improve program
25 outcomes.

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

3 “(1) WAIVER OR MODIFICATION OF REQUIRE-
4 MENTS.—In making a grant to an Indian tribe or
5 tribal organization under this section, the Secretary
6 may waive the matching requirement of subsection
7 (e) or modify an application requirement imposed by
8 or under subsection (c) if the Secretary determines
9 that the waiver or modification is appropriate to the
10 needs, culture, and circumstances of the Indian tribe
11 or tribal organization.

12 “(2) EVALUATION.—The Secretary shall use
13 tribally relevant data in carrying out the evaluation
14 under subsection (f)(2) with respect to an Indian
15 tribe or tribal organization.

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

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

23 “(1) is in foster care; and

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

1 **SEC. 14. 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.

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. 15. 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 predesignating 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 12(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)(3) (42 U.S.C.
5 629g(c)(3)) is amended by striking “436(b)(2)”
6 and inserting “436(b)(1)”.

7 **SEC. 16. REPORT ON POST ADOPTION AND SUBSIDIZED**
8 **GUARDIANSHIP SERVICES.**

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

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

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. 17. 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

- 1 comply with the additional requirements before being re-
- 2 garded as failing to comply with the requirements.

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