

Dear Friend of Children:

CWLA firmly believes in the full potential of all children. We see a future whereby all members and sectors of our society--families, schools, communities, and government--are united in meeting the needs of children. This collaborative approach allows for their full development and helps to create healthy, productive, and engaged members of society.

Recent government actions have not supported this vision for children and continue to divert federal support away from meeting their needs. We give our elected officials the responsibility to make choices and set priorities for our country. Their recent choices, unfortunately, fail to make children a true national priority and actually further threatens their safety and protection.

Attempts to "bring federal spending under control," for example, have weakened our federal commitment to protect and support abused and neglected children. Early in 2006, Congress chose to cut \$600 million from federal foster care assistance. By this action, we expect abused and neglected children, innocent by their own standing, to be denied the security of living with their grandparents and other relatives who can love and support them.

The result of these decisions are clear: reduced supports for abused and neglected children; reduced access to health care; less support through TANF; less access to child care; and fewer children receiving child support, yet the federal deficit continues to increase due to decisions to cut taxes.

As Congress sets forth an agenda for 2006, CWLA challenges the President and members of Congress to reaffirm the nation's commitment to children's well-being. CWLA's top legislative priority for 2006 is to work with Congress on aligning federal funding to better meet the needs of children and families in the child welfare system.

CWLA's 2006 Legislative Agenda outlines proposals for Congress in 2006 to better the lives of children and families. Working together, we can ensure that improving the lives of children, and protecting them from abuse and neglect, becomes a national priority.

Shay Bilchik, President and CEO  
Child Welfare League of America