



The Family First Transition and Support Act (HR 2702/S 1376)

- Eliminate the outdated Federal Title IV-E foster eligibility requirements for foster family homes tied to the 1996 Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) law, commonly referred to as the “look back,” which limits federal foster care support and recruitment.
 - Since Title IV-E was created in 1980 eligibility has NEVER been tied to need. When AFDC was eliminated in 1996, Congress tied eligibility to the frozen AFDC standard of that year with some assumption it could be replaced later. This change ties eligibility to a child’s status and placement into a family foster care setting which becomes even more important as we seek to implement the Family First Act and as we face the pressures of the opioid drug epidemic.
- Expand funding under Promoting Safe and Stable Families (Title IV-B part 2) by approximately \$200 million (added to current \$338 million for services) and allows funds to be used to help kin families especially those in crisis.
 - Expand funding for kinship support services by including them as one of the categories along with family preservation, family support, reunification and adoption support. Funding could be used for emergencies including child care, transportation, and legal services to ensure families have access to services that meet their needs and keep children safe in their homes. This too is critical during the opioid epidemic.
- Delay the requirement (to start October 1, 2019) that at least half of the services funded under Family First Prevention Services Act must be spent on the highest “well-supported” programs. It delays the date to 2026.
 - Under the Family-First Act, states providing services under the new law would have to make sure that at least 50% of their spending is spent on the limited and highest standard of “well-supported” programs. That requirement is immediate on October 1, 2019. To this point HHS is reviewing a very limited list of programs and few of them are likely to be designated as “well-supported.” This bill provides more time. That means more flexibility to spend on promising and supported programs and to build up the research and list of programs that can effectively prevent placement into foster care.
- Increase funding for caseworker training and workforce development for the next two years by \$20 million.
 - Increase the \$20 million a year for states for child welfare workforce development (if they meet the annual caseworker visit standards) to \$40 million over each of the next two years giving states new funds to develop and support workforce. This is important since all the challenges in child welfare: greater permanency, successfully recruiting foster and adoptive parents, better support for youth in foster care are tied to a stable and adequately staffed child welfare workforce.

- Provide states and tribes with the ability to draw-down \$15 million in state-directed research funds. This responds to concerns that child welfare programs can't fund research to make their programs into supported and well-supported programs.
 - Providing additional funds for state-directed research can add to the evidence base of what programs work and don't work. This is even more critical for in-home services. Unlike some medical services (mental health and substance abuse treatment) may not be able to tap into other funding for research and historical evidence of effectiveness.
- Boost funding for Regional Partnership Grants (RPGs) to \$60 million from \$20 million. This continues to build evidence base for these substance abuse/child welfare programs so that there are more programs that can qualify for Family First Services funds.
 - Historically substance abuse plays a significant role in child abuse and neglect and child removals. The RPGs are building research but over the years have not been extended to all geographic areas to test the different substance abuse challenges.
- Enhance funding for the child welfare Court Improvement Program (CIP).
 - The courts play a significant but sometimes unrecognized role in where a child is placed. Judges can overrule placement and treatment decisions sometimes with the knowledge of what is happening with the family and the agency and sometime without that knowledge. These funds help to educate and support the judicial decision making role and help coordinate communications between the child welfare agency and the courts.
- Provide a new \$75 million to support foster family recruitment including expanding therapeutic treatment foster care and other needed family foster care services.
 - These funds will assist in the recruitment and training of foster families, including therapeutic treatment foster care and the need for foster families addressing special needs such as the adolescent and teen population, children with special needs behavioral health needs, children and youth who have been victims of sex trafficking, sibling groups, and other training such as trauma informed practices.
- Increased support and resources for tribal government and consortia.
 - It is critical for us to increase resources and support for tribal communities across the country. Tribal set-asides are increased within Promoting Safe and Stable Families from 3 percent to 4.5 percent. Funding would increase from approximately \$9 million to \$30 million. Court funding would increase from \$1 million to \$5 million. There would be \$2 million new dollars from the \$75 million for recruitment.