
The Senate has not taken this issue up yet. Florida Department of Children and Families Secretary Sheldon testified in July at the House Ways and Means Committee before the co-sponsors of the bill on Florida's success with the waiver.

This bipartisan legislation was introduced by Representative Jim McDermott (D-WA) and John Linder (R-GA). The statement below by Representative John Linder recognizes the improved safety and reforms that reduced the number of Florida children in foster care.


"Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This bill comes to the floor in a fashion too many bills have not in this Congress: First, we held a subcommittee hearing; then the legislation was drafted with bipartisan support; and finally we ensured it does not increase the deficit by even a penny. It is an example of what can happen if we pursue in a bipartisan way goals that are widely shared, and that have been demonstrated to achieve real results.

The legislation before us would allow all States to follow the successful child welfare reform model tested in Florida and other places. As we learned in our hearing, those reforms reduced the number of Florida children in foster care by 36 percent, increased adoptions by 12,000, and improved child safety - all without spending more taxpayer money. I ask unanimous consent to insert in the record a letter of support for this legislation from Youth Villages, which has worked with local officials to achieve such successes in Florida.

Since 1994, 22 States have joined Florida in using child welfare waivers. This legislation extends the authority for all States to do so for 5 years. This will allow other States to test and replicate policies that are working. And it is my hope this will one day pave the way for successful Federal reforms covering all States. Meanwhile, let's move this bill forward and continue our efforts to improve the lives of all children."