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April 12, 2017

Dear Senators Blunt and Klobuchar:

Re: The Vulnerable Children and Families Act

I write to express my wholehearted support for the Vulnerable Children and Families Act (VCA) you plan to introduce in the Senate.

This Act represents an extraordinarily significant step forward by the U.S. Government to establish leadership on some of the most important human rights issues of our day.

Millions of children are now growing up in institutions and on the streets, deprived of the parenting care essential to healthy development. They are at risk for the worst forms of exploitation, including sex and labor trafficking. The numbers of such children have been escalating in recent years. At the same time the numbers of international adoptions have plummeted, despite the fact that such adoption represents one of the best options for these children to find nurturing homes.

This Act makes the U.S. Government a partner with the developing nations of the world in reforming policies so as to help unparented children worldwide escape their current fate. It would help these nations build better child welfare systems, enabling more children to grow up with their parents of origin. It would realign U.S. adoption policies so as to enable children who cannot be reunified with their parents to be placed promptly in nurturing domestic and international adoptive homes. It would relieve the burden on countries of origin of paying for institutional care and for the social costs of dealing with children damaged by such care.

This Act represents the culmination of many years of work and thought devoted to crafting legislation to address one of the most serious human rights crises we face in today's world. I hope that all in Congress can join together in this cause.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Bartholet