

THE COALITION FOR THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF UNPARENTED CHILDREN

Problem

Many tens of millions of children worldwide live without parents, with some 10-14 million institutionalized. And this number is growing. The plight of these unparented children is the largest unrecognized human rights crisis of the 21st century.

Adoption provides one of the best solutions for unparented children, and international adoption is the only available solution for many. However, few countries with large populations of unparented children have a robust domestic adoption tradition, and many countries impose severe restrictions on or altogether prohibit international adoption. This intentionally denies millions of unparented children in the possibility of growing up in a nurturing family. Although many believe that children will be best off if kept in their country of origin, no evidence supports this. There is extensive evidence, however, that denying children an early permanent nurturing home causes severe cognitive, socio-emotional, and other harms.

Solution

Representatives Tom Marino (R-PA) and David Cicilline (D-RI) introduced H.R. 2643, legislation requiring the Department of State to revise its practices so that its *Annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* includes violations of unparented children's rights, particularly the unnecessary holding of children in institutions and related denial of timely access to domestic and international adoption. Children have a fundamental human right to family, and this legislation vindicates that right.

This proposed legislation would require no new resources. Existing legislation already requires that the *Annual Country Reports* cover all significant human rights violations – this proposed legislation would just prevent the State Department from discriminating against unparented children by refusing even to consider their rights.

For more information on this important legislation, please contact Matt Powell with Rep. Marino (Matt.Powell@mail.house.gov) or Sarah Trister with Rep. Cicilline (Sarah.Trister@mail.house.gov).

Advocacy Initiative

As a broad coalition of child human rights experts and organizations, we advocate for children's most fundamental need, and most basic human right: to grow up in loving, nurturing families, with committed parents capable of providing unconditional love on an ongoing basis.

Coalition Members

American Academy of Adoption Attorneys (Debra E. Guston, President)

America World Adoption (Brian Luwis, CEO)

Center for Adoption Policy (Diane Kunz and Ann Reese, Co-Founders & Executive Directors)

Harvard Law School Child Advocacy Program (Elizabeth Bartholet, Faculty Director)

Love Grows Kids (Pete Leppanen, Kelly Dempsey and Chad Turner, Co-Directors)

National Council For Adoption (Chuck Johnson, President & CEO)

Nourished Hearts (Kim de Blecourt, President)

Paulo Barrozo, Associate Professor of Law, Boston College Law School

Saddleback Church Orphan Care Initiative (Elizabeth Styffe, Director)

University of Pennsylvania Field Center for Children's Research, Policy and Practice (Cassie Statuto Bevan, Child Welfare Fellow)