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Legislative Alert – Ask Your Representative to Co-Sponsor HCYA

What Is HCYA?

On Tuesday, January 6, the first day of the 111th Congress, a bipartisan set of House Members introduced HR 29 - The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2009 (HCYA). Congresswoman Judy Biggert (R-13th/IL) introduced the legislation, joined by Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy (D-4th/NY), Congressman Geoff Davis (R-4th/KY), Congressman Andre Carson (D-7th/IN), and Congressman Ruben Hinojosa (D-15th/TX).

HR 29 is identical to the "Homeless Children and Youth Amendment" proposed by NPACH, NAEHCY, and First Focus during last year's House debate on HUD McKinney-Vento reauthorization. The bill amends the U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness to include children, youth, and their families who are verified as homeless by federal program personnel from four federal programs (including school district liaisons, Head Start programs, Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs, and early intervention programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C).

HR 29 is straight-forward common sense legislation with a simple premise - that if one federal agency defines a child or youth as homeless, another federal agency (HUD) should do the same thing. Taking this approach will provide all homeless children & youth, and their families, with greater opportunities to obtain safe, stable, permanent housing and other supportive services.

How Your Representative Can Co-Sponsor HCYA

Find and contact your Representative at www.house.gov.

Call your Representative's office and ask for the staff person who handles affordable housing and homelessness issues. If the staffer is unavailable, leave a voicemail for them. Be sure to mention that you're a constituent. Ask the staffer to call you back to discuss a piece of pending legislation - H.R. 29, a bill to amend the HUD definition of homelessness.

When you talk to the staffer ask him or her to have your Representative co-sponsor HR 29. Explain the legislation and why it is important to you and to your community. If the staffer has questions that you can't answer, tell them that you'll find out the answer and get back to them - then contact Jeremy Rosen at NPACH; jrosen@npach.org or (202) 714-5378.

At the conclusion of your conversation, ask the staffer to let you know when your Representative will decide whether to co-sponsor HR 29. Also ask the staffer to contact you and inform you of the decision. If you do not hear back from the staffer, call him or her back. Remember - Congressional staff are very busy. It is always possible that they won't be able to call you back as quickly as you would like - but if you contact them as constituents they are likely to get back to you.

A current list of HR 29 co-sponsors is always available on THOMAS - the legislation tracking website for Congress. Access THOMAS at <http://thomas.loc.gov/> and then type in HR 29.