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December 13, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Biggert and Ranking Member Gutierrez:

I am writing in support of H.R. 32, The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011. This legislation amends the U.S. Department of 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: school district homeless liaisons designated under the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act; Head Start programs; Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs; and Early Intervention programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C.

The Homeless Children and Youth Act creates a streamlined, efficient referral process for homeless children and youth to access HUD homeless services. It stands in contrast to HUD's recently released regulations on the definition of homelessness, which impose requirements for multiple moves and long periods of homelessness, as well as extensive documentation and recordkeeping, before a family or youth receives HUD homeless assistance. The simplicity of the Homeless Children and Youth Act is modeled on successfully implemented provisions of the Child Nutrition Act and the College Cost Reduction and Access Act.

The Homeless Children and Youth Act provides communities with the flexibility to serve and house families, children, and youth who are extremely vulnerable and in need of assistance. People in local communities are the best equipped to assess specific homeless situations to know which homeless families and youth are most in need of housing and services. Service providers make these determinations on a daily basis, and should be permitted to assess the full range of homeless situations.

For these reasons, we strongly support HR 32. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of all homeless children and youth.

Sincerely,

Karen Olson, President