

110TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# S. 379

To support the establishment or expansion and operation of programs using a network of public and private community entities to provide mentoring for children in foster care.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JANUARY 24, 2007

Ms. LANDRIEU introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Finance

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## A BILL

To support the establishment or expansion and operation of programs using a network of public and private community entities to provide mentoring for children in foster care.

1       *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*

2       *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3       **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4        This Act may be cited as the “Foster Care Mentoring

5       Act of 2007”.

6       **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7       Congress makes the following findings:

7 (2) Children that have mentors have better re-  
8 lationships with adults, fewer disciplinary referrals,  
9 and more confidence to achieve their goals.

10 (3) In 2001, over 163,000 children in the foster  
11 care system were under the age of 5 years.

12 (4) In 2001, over 124,000 children were under  
13 the age of 10 when they were removed from their  
14 parents or caretakers.

15 (5) The International Day of the Child, spon-  
16 sored by Children United Nations, has served as a  
17 great tool to recruit mentors and partner them with  
18 needy foster care children.

19 (6) On November 10, 2002, as many as 3,000  
20 children will be matched with mentors as a result of  
21 the International Day of the Child.

22 (7) States should be encouraged to incorporate  
23 mentor programs into the delivery of their foster  
24 care services. The State of California serves as a

1 great example, matching close to half a million men-  
2 tors with needy children.

3 (8) Mentor programs that serve foster children  
4 are unique and require additional considerations in-  
5 cluding specialized training and support necessary to  
6 provide for consistent, long term relationships for  
7 children in care.

## 12 SEC. 3. PROGRAMS FOR MENTORING CHILDREN IN FOSTER 13 CARE.

14 Subpart 2 of part B of title IV of the Social Security  
15 Act (42 U.S.C. 629 et seq.) is amended by adding at the  
16 end the following:

17 "SEC. 440. PROGRAMS FOR MENTORING CHILDREN IN FOS-  
18 TFB CARE

19       “(a) PURPOSE.—It is the purpose of this section to  
20 authorize the Secretary to make grants to eligible appli-  
21 cants to support the establishment or expansion and oper-  
22 ation of programs using a network of public and private  
23 community entities to provide mentoring for children in  
24 foster care

25        "(b) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

1           “(1) CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE.—The term  
2       ‘children in foster care’ means children who have  
3       been removed from the custody of their biological or  
4       adoptive parents by a State child welfare agency.

5           “(2) MENTORING.—The term ‘mentoring’  
6       means a structured, managed program in which chil-  
7       dren are appropriately matched with screened and  
8       trained adult volunteers for one-on-one relationships,  
9       that involves meetings and activities on a regular  
10       basis, and that is intended to meet, in part, the  
11       child’s need for involvement with a caring and sup-  
12       portive adult who provides a positive role model.

13           “(3) POLITICAL SUBDIVISION.—The term ‘poli-  
14       tical subdivision’ means a local jurisdiction below the  
15       level of the State government, including a county,  
16       parish, borough, or city.

17           “(c) GRANT PROGRAM.—

18           “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall carry  
19       out a program to award grants to States to support  
20       the establishment or expansion and operation of pro-  
21       grams using networks of public and private commu-  
22       nity entities to provide mentoring for children in fos-  
23       ter care.

24           “(2) GRANTS TO POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS.—  
25       The Secretary may award a grant under this sub-

1 section directly to a political subdivision if the sub-  
2 division serves a substantial number of foster care  
3 youth (as determined by the Secretary).

4       “(3) APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS.—To be eli-  
5 gible for a grant under paragraph (1), the chief ex-  
6 ecutive officer of the State or political subdivision  
7 shall submit to the Secretary an application con-  
8 taining the following:

9           “(A) PROGRAM DESIGN.—A description of  
10 the proposed program to be carried out using  
11 amounts provided under this grant, including—

12               “(i) a list of local public and private  
13 organizations and entities that will partici-  
14 pate in the mentoring network;

15               “(ii) the name, description, and qual-  
16 ifications of the entity that will coordinate  
17 and oversee the activities of the mentoring  
18 network;

19               “(iii) the number of mentor-child  
20 matches proposed to be established and  
21 maintained annually under the program;

22               “(iv) such information as the Sec-  
23 retary may require concerning the methods  
24 to be used to recruit, screen support, and  
25 oversee individuals participating as men-

10                   “(B) TRAINING.—An assurance that all  
11                   mentors covered under the program will receive  
12                   intensive and ongoing training in the following  
13                   areas:

1                             “(vii) Other matters related to working with children in care.

3                             “(C) SCREENING.—An assurance that all  
4                             mentors covered under the program are appropriately  
5                             screened and have demonstrated a willingness to comply with all aspects of the mentor  
6                             program, including—

8                             “(i) a description of the methods to be  
9                             used to conduct criminal background  
10                            checks on all prospective mentors; and

11                            “(ii) a description of the methods to  
12                             be used to ensure that the mentors are  
13                             willing and able to serve as a mentor on a  
14                             long term, consistent basis.

15                            “(D) EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS.—An  
16                             assurance that all mentors recruited to serve as  
17                             academic mentors will—

18                             “(i) have a high school diploma or its  
19                             equivalent; and

20                             “(ii) have completed at least 1 year of  
21                             study in a program leading to a graduate  
22                             or post graduate degree.

23                             “(E) COMMUNITY CONSULTATION; COORDI-  
24                             NATION WITH OTHER PROGRAMS.—A demon-  
25                             stration that, in developing and implementing

1                   the program, the State or political subdivision  
2                   will, to the extent feasible and appropriate—

17                   “(F) EQUAL ACCESS FOR LOCAL SERVICE  
18                   PROVIDERS.—An assurance that public and pri-  
19                   vate entities and community organizations, in-  
20                   cluding religious organizations and Indian orga-  
21                   nizations, will be eligible to participate on an  
22                   equal basis.

23                             “(G) RECORDS, REPORTS, AND AUDITS.—  
24                             An agreement that the State or political sub-  
25                             division will maintain such records, make such

1 reports, and cooperate with such reviews or au-  
2 dits as the Secretary may find necessary for  
3 purposes of oversight of project activities and  
4 expenditures.

5 “(H) EVALUATION.—An agreement that  
6 the State or political subdivision will cooperate  
7 fully with the Secretary’s ongoing and final  
8 evaluation of the program under the plan, by  
9 means including providing the Secretary access  
10 to the program and program-related records  
11 and documents, staff, and grantees receiving  
12 funding under the plan.

13 “(4) FEDERAL SHARE.—

14 “(A) IN GENERAL.—A grant for a program  
15 under this subsection shall be available to pay  
16 a percentage share of the costs of the program  
17 up to 75 percent for each year for which the  
18 grant is awarded.

19 “(B) NON-FEDERAL SHARE.—The non-  
20 Federal share of the cost of projects under this  
21 subsection may be in cash or in kind. In deter-  
22 mining the amount of the non-Federal share,  
23 the Secretary may attribute fair market value  
24 to goods, services, and facilities contributed  
25 from non-Federal sources.

1           “(5)    CONSIDERATIONS    IN    AWARDING  
2    GRANTS.—In awarding grants under this subsection,  
3    the Secretary shall take into consideration—

4               “(A) the overall qualifications and capacity  
5    of the State or political subdivision program  
6    and its partners to effectively carry out a men-  
7    toring program under this subsection;

8               “(B) the level and quality of training pro-  
9    vided to mentors under the program;

10               “(C) evidence of coordination of the pro-  
11    gram with the State’s or political subdivision’s  
12    social services and education programs;

13               “(D) the ability of the State or political  
14    subdivision to provide supervision and support  
15    for mentors under the program and the youth  
16    served by such mentors;

17               “(E) evidence of consultation with insti-  
18    tutes of higher learning;

19               “(F) the number of children in care served  
20    by the State or political subdivision; and

21               “(G) any other factors that the Secretary  
22    determines to be significant with respect to the  
23    need for or the potential success of carrying out  
24    a mentoring program under this subsection.

1           “(6) USE OF FUNDS.—Of the amount awarded  
2        to a State or political subdivision under a grant  
3        under this subsection the State or subdivision  
4        shall—

5           “(A) use not less than 50 percent of the  
6        total grant amount for the training and ongoing  
7        educational support of mentors; and

8           “(B) use not more than 10 percent of the  
9        total grant amount for administrative purposes.

10          “(7) MAXIMUM GRANT AMOUNT.—

11           “(A) IN GENERAL.—In awarding grants  
12        under this section, the Secretary shall consider  
13        the number of children served by the jurisdiction  
14        and the grant amount relative to the need  
15        for services.

16           “(B) LIMIT.—The amount of a grant  
17        awarded to a State or political subdivision  
18        under this subsection shall not exceed  
19        \$600,000.

20          “(8) ANNUAL REPORT.—Not later than 1 year  
21        after the date of enactment of this section, and an-  
22        nually thereafter, the Secretary shall prepare and  
23        submit to Congress a report that includes the fol-  
24        lowing with respect to the year involved:

1               “(A) A description of the number of pro-  
2               grams receiving grant awards under this sub-  
3               section.

4               “(B) A description of the number of men-  
5               tors who serve in the programs described in  
6               subparagraph (A).

7               “(C) A description of the number of  
8               mentored foster children—

9                       “(i) who graduate from high school;  
10                       “(ii) who enroll in college; and  
11                       “(iii) who are adopted by their men-  
12               tors.

13               “(D) Any other information that the Sec-  
14               retary determines to be relevant to the evalua-  
15               tion of the program under this subsection.

16               “(9) EVALUATION.—Not later than 3 years  
17               after the date of enactment of this section, the Sec-  
18               retary shall conduct an evaluation of the effective-  
19               ness of programs funded under this section, includ-  
20               ing a comparison between the rate of drug and alco-  
21               hol abuse, teenage pregnancy, delinquency, home-  
22               lessness, and other outcome measures for mentored  
23               foster care youth and non-mentored foster care  
24               youth.

1                   “(10) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

2                   There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out  
3                   this subsection, \$15,000,000 for each of fiscal years  
4                   2008 and 2009, and such sums as may be necessary  
5                   for each succeeding fiscal year.

6                   “(d) NATIONAL COORDINATION OF STATEWIDE

7                   MENTORING PARTNERSHIPS.—

8                   “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may award  
9                   a competitive grant to an eligible entity to establish  
10                   a National Hotline Service or Website to provide in-  
11                   formation to individuals who are interested in be-  
12                   coming mentors to youth in foster care.

13                   “(2) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—  
14                   There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out  
15                   this subsection, \$4,000,000 for each of fiscal years  
16                   2008 and 2009, and such sums as may be necessary  
17                   for each succeeding fiscal year.

18                   “(e) LOAN FORGIVENESS.—

19                   “(1) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

20                   “(A) ELIGIBLE MENTOR.—The term ‘eli-  
21                   gible mentor’ means an individual who has served  
22                   as a mentor in a statewide mentor program es-  
23                   tablished under subsection (c) for at least 200  
24                   hours in a single calendar year.

1                   “(B) FEDERAL STUDENT LOAN.—The  
2                   term ‘Federal student loan’ means any loan  
3                   made, insured, or guaranteed under part B, D,  
4                   or E of title IV of the Higher Education Act of  
5                   1965.

6                   “(C) SECRETARY.—The term ‘Secretary’  
7                   means the Secretary of Education.

8                   “(2) RELIEF FROM INDEBTEDNESS.—

9                   “(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall  
10                   carry out a program to provide for the dis-  
11                   charge or cancellation of the Federal student  
12                   loan indebtedness of an eligible mentor.

13                   “(B) METHOD OF DISCHARGE OR CAN-  
14                   CELLATION.—A loan that will be discharged or  
15                   canceled under the program under subpara-  
16                   graph (A) shall be discharged or canceled as  
17                   provided for using the method under section  
18                   437(a), 455(a)(1), or 464(c)(1)(F) of the High-  
19                   er Education Act of 1965, as applicable.

20                   “(C) AMOUNT OF RELIEF.—The amount of  
21                   relief to be provided with respect to a loan  
22                   under this subsection shall—

23                   “(i) be equal to \$2,000 for each 200  
24                   hours of service of an eligible mentor; and

1                             “(ii) not exceed a total of \$20,000 for  
2                             an eligible individual.

3                             “(3) FACILITATION OF CLAIMS.—The Secretary  
4                             shall—

5                             “(A) establish procedures for the filing of  
6                             applications for the discharge or cancellation of  
7                             loans under this subsection by regulations that  
8                             shall be prescribed and published within 90  
9                             days after the date of enactment of this section  
10                             and without regard to the requirements of sec-  
11                             tion 553 of title 5, United States Code; and

12                             “(B) take such actions as may be nec-  
13                             essary to publicize the availability of the pro-  
14                             gram established under this subsection for eligi-  
15                             ble mentors.

16                             “(4) FUNDING.—Amounts available for the pur-  
17                             poses of making payments to lenders in accordance  
18                             with section 437(a) of the Higher Education Act of  
19                             1965 for the discharge of indebtedness of deceased  
20                             or disabled individuals shall be available for making  
21                             payments to lenders of loans to eligible mentors as  
22                             provided for in this subsection.”.

○