

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

RECOGNIZING JIMMY E. STEELE III FOR ACHIEVING THE RANK OF EAGLE SCOUT

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 14, 2006

Mr. GRAVES. Mr. Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Jimmy E. Steele III, a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 167, and in earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Jimmy has been very active with his troop, participating in many scout activities. Over the many years Jimmy has been involved with scouting, he has not only earned numerous merit badges, but also the respect of his family, peers, and community. Due to Jimmy's hard work and leadership, the Winston R-VI school baseball field now proudly displays a new flag pole and American Flag.

Mr. Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Jimmy E. Steele III for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

CHILD WELFARE LEAGUE OF AMERICA

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 14, 2006

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring to your attention the outstanding work and commitment of the Child Welfare League of America, CWLA. This organization acts on the premise that every child is valuable and has something to contribute to society. They believe that our children are entitled to nurturance, protection, and the chance to develop to his or her full human potential.

The CWLA testified before the Human Resources Subcommittee of the Ways and Means Committee on May 23, 2006 to review proposals to improve child protective services, all in an effort to highlight the importance of the child welfare system in ensuring that children and families are afforded the necessary resources and services available.

Although the family and the child welfare system have specific responsibilities, we all know that society as a whole shares the responsibility for promoting healthy human growth and development.

I am submitting at this time part I of the testimony given by CWLA and hope that you will find it informative.

Hello, I am Linda Spears, Vice President of Corporate Communications and Development of the Child Welfare League of America, CWLA. I am honored to submit comments on behalf of CWLA, and our nearly 900 public and private nonprofit, child-serving

member agencies this afternoon. The attention given by the Human Resources Subcommittee of the Ways and Means Committee focusing on the child protective services system and the reauthorization of the Promoting Safe and Stable Families, PSSSF, program further shows the intent to ensure that our children have the appropriate resources and services available to them.

CWLA believes that as a country we must confirm our commitment to prevent child abuse and neglect and to support children who have been abused and neglected. We support strengthened partnerships between federal, state, and local governments and providers in the nonprofit and charitable communities in order to do a better job of protecting our nation's children.

IMPROVING THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

In 2004, an estimated 3 million children were reported as abused or neglected and received an assessment or screening to determine whether or not there was evidence of abuse or neglect. Approximately 872,000 children were substantiated as abused or neglected. These numbers are similar to previous years. Another consistent pattern is that more than sixty percent of child victims were victims of neglect, while eighteen percent were physically abused and ten percent were sexually abused. Thirty percent of victims were age 3 or younger. We also know that 1,490 children died from child abuse in 2004. Overall eighty-three percent of the time a parent or parents were involved in the abuse. Another consistent statistic from year to year is that of the children who have been substantiated as abused or neglected, nearly 40 percent do not receive follow up services.

The foundation on which child protective services, CPS, is established and what should always be the first goal of any CPS response is keeping children safe from child abuse and neglect. The CPS response begins with the assessment of reports of child abuse and neglect. If CPS determines the child is at risk of abuse and neglect or has been abused or neglected, CPS should ensure the child and his or her family receive services and supports from the public child protection agency and the community.

CWLA believes the best ways to ensure children are safe from all forms of maltreatment are comprehensive, community-based approaches to protecting children and supporting and strengthening families. Public and private agencies, in collaboration with individual citizens and community entities, can prevent and remedy child maltreatment, achieve child safety, and promote child and family well-being.

Child protective service, CPS, systems in the fifty states are funded by a variety of sources. In fact, funding goes beyond the two programs specifically targeted for today's hearing, the IV-B part 1 and IV-B part 2 programs. Consistently the Social Services Block Grant, SSBG, serves as a major source of funding with thirty-eight states spending \$194 million in SSBG funds in 2004 for child protective services. These funds include some TANF dollars transferred into SSBG. We highlight this because SSBG, which is under the jurisdiction of this subcommittee, is threatened with a potential reduction of \$500 million in the President's proposed FY

2007 budget, a thirty percent reduction in funding that would be devastating to CPS and many other child welfare services. State CPS systems also draw from the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, CAPTA, but funding under the state grants part of that program is limited to \$27 million and has never reached its full authorized funding level.

A CPS system that functions well is one that has a fully staffed and competent workforce. When understaffed and overworked, this system of child protection will fail. CWLA cannot emphasize enough the need for a national child welfare workforce strategy that puts well trained and educated workers in place, keeps caseloads at manageable levels, and provides competent supervision and ongoing training.

It is also important to note that CPS is only one part of the child welfare system and it cannot be viewed in isolation. If the efforts at reunification of a family fail, or the adoption fails, or services are not available for families and children who come into contact with the system, then we may find these very same children entering the system again. Children with a prior history of maltreatment are more likely to experience a recurrence of maltreatment than those who were not prior victims.

THE NEED FOR SERVICES

CWLA's vision for an optimal child welfare system encompasses a continuum of services ranging from prevention of abuse and neglect to permanency and stability for children who experience out of home care. Key ingredients of this system are a family-centered approach, an ample, stable, and highly professional workforce, the availability and targeted application of services to prevent child abuse and neglect, maintaining families when maltreatment has occurred and child safety can be reasonably assured, and achieving permanency and stability for children who must experience foster care. These components are consistent with current research and with federal expectations associated with the Child and Family Service Review process.

Family centered approach

Research in child maltreatment, juvenile justice, children's mental health, and parent education supports the effectiveness of interventions that involve the entire family over those targeting the individual parent or child alone. A family-centered approach engages families in addressing the problems that affect the care of their children. Such engagement has been linked positively to compliance with and completion of case plans.

Stable professional workforce

Effective child welfare services are based on accurate differential assessments and require knowledge of human behavior, the factors underlying child maltreatment, and the way in which both risks and protective factors interact to produce an overall picture of a family's needs. Thus, it is not surprising that child welfare workforce research suggests the need for staff that have formal social work education, especially that obtained through specialized child welfare programs such as those developed through Title IV-E-supported agency-university partnerships. Studies further point to the importance of

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Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

consistent mentoring by competent supervisors, and to a supportive and flexible organizational environment. All of these factors have been linked to reduced staff turnover, which recent research suggests is critically important both to minimize costs associated with frequent hiring and training and to improve outcomes for children and families. Greater amount of caseworker contact with children and parents has also been associated with better outcomes. These findings make it imperative that agencies maintain staff in sufficient numbers to provide manageable workloads that do not require caseworkers to sacrifice the provision of direct services in order to complete administrative tasks and documentation.

Prevention of abuse and neglect

Studies have demonstrated the effectiveness or promise of several approaches to prevention of child maltreatment. Models such as Nurse Family Partnerships and Healthy Families have produced evidence that they positively impact a variety of outcomes for children and families, including prevention of abuse and neglect. Likewise, high quality pre-kindergarten programs like the Chicago Child Parent Centers and Head Start that include parental involvement and supports have also demonstrated effectiveness. Independent studies have found that the financial savings achieved by the most effective of these approaches far exceeds their costs. Rigorous cost-benefit analyses conducted by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy showed cost savings for several pre-kindergarten and home visitation programs as well as for Parent-Child Interaction Therapy, a center-based intervention that provides direct coaching to parents as they interact with their young children.

Several interventions that target older children and their families have also been demonstrated to have benefits in lessening children's problematic behavior and improving family functioning. Family-based therapeutic models such as Functional Family Therapy and Multi-Systemic Therapy have been rigorously tested in sites across the country and, despite some variation in findings, there is substantial evidence of their benefits to youth and their families.

Maintaining families

Many children can be safely maintained in their families through the timely application of interventions that correctly target the underlying causes of maltreatment. A number of studies support the benefits of interventions that have a behavioral, skill-building focus and that address family functioning in multiple domains including home, school, and community. Cognitive behavioral models have been demonstrated to reduce physical punishment and parental aggression in less time than alternative approaches. The most effective treatment involves all members of the family and addresses not only parenting skills, but also parent-child interaction and a range of parental life competencies such as communication, problem solving, and anger control. Attention to immediate, concrete needs has also been identified as a key factor in supporting family engagement and positive outcomes.

Permanency and stability

A wealth of research demonstrates the importance of children being nurtured in a stable family environment, confirming the need to move those who must enter foster care into permanent living situations as quickly as possible. Recent studies suggest that, when children must leave their families, well-supported kinship placements have the potential to provide more stable and normalizing environments than unrelated family care.

Most children who enter foster care are able to return to their families of origin, often within less than one year. However, when that is not possible, alternatives such as adoption or subsidized guardianship can offer long term stability. Cost analyses of child welfare services have linked kinship care and subsidized guardianship to cost savings. One study found the cost of effecting an adoption for children in foster care to range from \$6,000 to \$28,539, or an average of \$19,141, suggesting that this permanency alternative has the potential to achieve a substantial savings over long term foster care.

While research supports the use of family care when deemed appropriate by a full assessment, group care is another placement option that may offer benefits for certain youth when used strategically, for a period of time indicated by ongoing assessment, and as part of a plan to maintain or rebuild family and community connections. However, family care, even in therapeutic foster care settings with multiple supportive services, tends to be substantially less expensive.

Aftercare and transitional services

Data indicate that about 25 percent of all children who exit out-of-home care will return at some point, often within one year. The likelihood of re-entry is especially great when children or parents have more numerous or complex needs or when they are exposed to more extreme environmental stressors. Although the likelihood of maltreatment recurrence and/or subsequent re-entry into foster care is undoubtedly related to decision-making and services offered prior to reunification, it strongly suggests a need for aftercare services.

The limited research in family reunification aftercare, indicates that it is most successful when it is initially intensive and includes the availability of concrete services and ongoing assessment of risk. The association of social isolation with failed reunification also suggests the importance of linking with extended family, extra-familial social networks, and informal resources. Tapering off of services should be based on the family's needs rather than on an arbitrary time frame.

Services during and after the adoption process are also an important part of the service continuum. Although the rate of adoption dissolution is quite low overall, research indicates that some placements may have greater needs for follow-up services and supports. One study reported that, while less than 30% of all adoptive families used post-adoption services other than informational resources, most families adopting through a public agency used some type of counseling. This finding was attributed to the larger number of special needs of children placed with these families. As in other types of child welfare intervention, family-focused approaches appear to be the most helpful in supporting adoption stability. Research suggests that adoptive parents may also value participation in support groups, access to literature and seminars, and concrete services like respite care, subsidies, and health benefits.

Services targeting youth who will exit foster care to independence are another important component of a continuum of care. Studies have identified four key elements: school completion, high-intensity supports over time, a work experience component, and the presence of a stable, caring adult as factors leading to successful transition of youth to work and independence. Youth have been shown to benefit from a plan based on systematic assessment, combined with focused skills development, involvement of caregivers as teachers, and re-establishing or maintaining connections to birth/extended family and community.

TRIBUTE TO THE HOUGHTON GREMLINS BASKETBALL TEAM

HON. BART STUPAK

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 14, 2006

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor 12 extraordinary young women and their coaches who showed incredible determination, character and athleticism in winning the 2005 Girls Class-C State of Michigan Basketball Championship.

As the 2005 season commenced, the Houghton Gremlins were considered by many observers to be in a rebuilding phase. However, this dedicated team of young women was determined to shed that label, disprove the skeptics and move beyond the regional level.

The young women of the 2005 Houghton Gremlins were not the tallest team. In fact, not a single one of their players stood above 5 feet and 8 inches. Many of the teams the Gremlins faced had players who were taller than 6 feet. Yet, what the Gremlins lacked in height, they made up for in speed, skill and, most importantly, a tireless desire to succeed. In many ways, they embodied the famous Theodore Roosevelt quote, "What matters is not the size of the dog in the fight, but the size of the fight in the dog."

The Gremlin's regular season record of 18-2 demonstrated their winning attitude. Their undefeated record within the West PAC Conference was yet further evidence of their hard work. However, as the post season began, the Gremlins felt that even with a great regular season, they had not yet accomplished their goal.

Winning in the post season would require living up to a favorite saying of their coach, Julie Filpus: "Winners are like biscuits, when things heat up, they rise to the occasion."

The Gremlins took that advice to heart by earning a trip to the quarterfinals with timely three point shots, accurate free throw shooting and fast break layups. On November 28th, the Gremlins packed their bags and headed downstate to Lansing to compete for a state championship.

In Lansing, the Gremlins proved once more that they simply would not give up. At the end of the first half of the title game, Houghton trailed by ten points. However, the Gremlins refocused, rallied and regained their lead. Ultimately, the Lady Gremlins were victorious, eking out a 50-44 victory over the unbeaten Michigan Center.

Athletics in our public schools are meant to teach young people important life lessons such as the value of teamwork and the importance of hard work. Clearly, the 2005 Houghton Gremlins embody these values.

Mr. Speaker, these young women won not only a trophy, but also the admiration, respect and pride of the entire Houghton and Upper Peninsula community. I therefore commend the players, Callen Richards, Jodi Riutta, Whitney Rivest, Molly Turner, Amy Erva, Brooke Asiala, Nicole Asiala, Madeline Northey, Kristen Reed, Beth Sutherland, Josie Riutta and team captain Alyssa Polso. I also salute their coaches, Julie Filpus, Wayne Henry, Chuck LaPointe and Jen Sundstrom, for serving as role models and mentors to these talented young women.