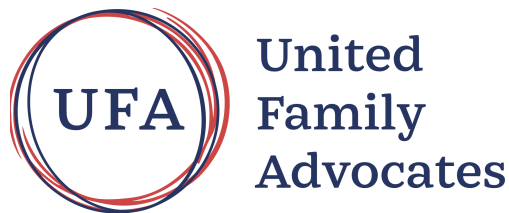


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United Family Advocates Releases Report to Modernize Federal Child Welfare Funding and Reduce Unnecessary Family Separation

Bipartisan group of child welfare advocates, attorneys, researchers, and nonprofit leaders calls on Congress to reform fragmented funding streams with a clear three-grant framework focused on child safety and family stability

WASHINGTON, D.C. – United Family Advocates (UFA), a bipartisan coalition of child welfare advocates, attorneys, researchers, and nonprofit leaders, today released a framework proposing the restructuring of federal child welfare financing. Developed with guidance from a bipartisan advisory group, [*Supporting Strong Families and Safe Children: A Framework for Reshaping Federal Child Welfare Funding*](#) proposes a streamlined three-grant structure to modernize federal child welfare funding, improve child safety, reduce unnecessary family separation, and better align taxpayer dollars with outcomes for children and families.

In the U.S., [*a child is removed from their home every 2.5 minutes*](#), and the vast majority of those separations are not driven by abuse, but by poverty. More than [*two million families are investigated by child protective services each year*](#), yet most investigations do not result in a finding of abuse or neglect.

These outcomes are driven by a fragmented federal financing structure that too often funds intervention after families enter crisis rather than helping families meet basic needs before separation becomes a possibility.

UFA's [*framework*](#) offers a bipartisan path to reform that consolidates current funding into three grants, each with a distinct purpose:

- **Child Protection Grant** – Funding for foster care, guardianship, and adoption, as well as efforts to safely prevent imminent removal and to reunify families the system has separated. When separation is necessary, priority placement with kin and siblings would preserve family bonds when a child cannot remain safely in the home.
- **Family Legal Representation and Court Improvement Grant** – Funding to ensure families have access to high-quality legal representation. Administered outside the child welfare agency to avoid conflicts of interest, family legal representation funds would strengthen the integrity of decision-making and ensure that when government intervention in family life is contemplated, families have access to fair court processes.

- **Family and Community Support Grant** – Funding for community-based supports that help families meet their needs early, before a setback becomes a crisis. Eligibility would be based on need, reinforcing a critical distinction between family hardship and child safety concerns, and ensuring families do not have to enter the child welfare system to access help.

“The system struggles to distinguish between a family that is struggling and a child who is in danger. When hardship is conflated with child safety risk, separation becomes the default and families and children are left with a lifetime of trauma,” **said Joanna Lack, Executive Director of United Family Advocates.** “These recommendations are designed to restructure financing to support families before setbacks become crises, and to treat foster care as a last resort rather than a primary solution.”

“Forced removals are traumatizing for children and their families,” said **Shrounda Selivanoff, UFA Board Member and Chief of Parent Representation Initiatives, Washington State Office of Public Defense Parent Representation Program.** “These recommendations reflect what is possible when advocates with different perspectives come together around the shared belief that strong families are essential. I’m proud to be part of a coalition that is offering policymakers a clear and actionable roadmap to modernize a child welfare system that has remained largely unchanged for decades. Most importantly, these proposals put forward solutions to help prevent unnecessary and unjust family separations.”

“Too often, federal child welfare funding rewards family separation instead of helping families stay safely together,” said **Andrew C. Brown, UFA Board Member and Vice President of Policy at the Texas Public Policy Foundation.** “Having represented children, defended parental rights, and helped families navigate adoption, I’ve seen firsthand the need for a system that prioritizes prevention and stability. This report offers a commonsense roadmap to better align federal dollars with stronger families, better outcomes for children, and responsible stewardship of taxpayer resources.”

UFA’s report comes as federal policymakers increasingly examine whether existing child welfare funding mechanisms adequately support child safety, family stability, and responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars.

UFA’s federal funding recommendations are available [here](#).

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ABOUT UNITED FAMILY ADVOCATES

United Family Advocates (UFA) is a group of child welfare advocates, attorneys, researchers, and nonprofit leaders who together advance a bipartisan vision for policies that keep children safe while protecting the strength and integrity of families. We bring together organizations from across the political spectrum, from the ACLU to the Texas Public Policy Foundation, united by the conviction that the best way to protect children is to support their families. For more information, visit unitedfamilyadvocates.org.