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U.S. House of Representatives

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June 2, 2008

Mr. Mike Arsham
Executive Director, Child Welfare Organizing Project
East Harlem Neighborhood Center
80 East 110th Street, 1E
New York, NY 10029

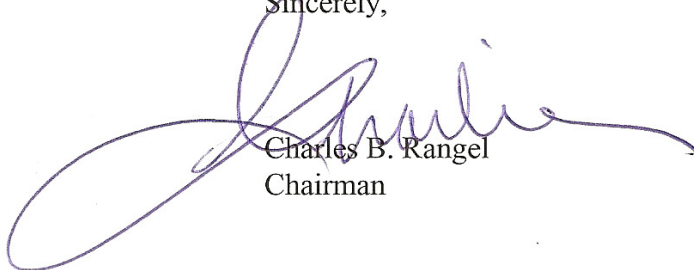
Dear Mr. Arsham,

Thank you for your letter on the child welfare forum that we cosponsored together in December in Harlem on the over-representation of African-American children in the foster care system. The forum was a great success and helped generate a lot of discussion on the issue, as well as policy initiatives that can begin to address this problem. In fact, the recommendations that you and your colleagues have developed following the forum were so helpful that they were included in the Invest in KIDS Act (H.R. 5466) that was introduced by Representative Jim McDermott and I earlier this year.

The Invest in KIDS Act would bring comprehensive reform to the child welfare system. It would begin to address some of the problems associated with the disproportionate representation of African Americans in foster care and would improve the overall well-being of every child and family that is involved in the system. Specifically, the legislation would: make grants available to States to engage in activities designed to assist families in crisis and reduce the need for foster care; provide federal foster care payments to all children who are in the system; provide federal assistance to grandparents and other relatives caring for their kin; extend federal foster care assistance to youth up to age 21; increase federal funding for caseworker training; and, extend federal foster care services directly to tribal governments who run their own child welfare programs. The bill will not solve every problem in the child welfare system, but it is certainly a giant step in the right direction. I would strongly encourage you and your colleagues to mention this important piece of legislation and the need for comprehensive reform when meeting with other congressional representatives.

Thank you for your dedication to helping those families who encounter problems in our child welfare system. Your service to our most vulnerable children and families in Harlem, and the rest of New York, is outstanding. I look forward to continuing to work with you in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Charles B. Rangel", with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the left.

Charles B. Rangel
Chairman