

National Coalition on Children and Disasters

*c/o Save the Children US Programs
2000 L Street, NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20036*

January 27, 2012

The Honorable Mary Landrieu
United States Senate
431 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Landrieu:

The National Coalition on Children and Disasters is a community of over 25 child-serving national organizations that advocates for public policy that supports the well-being of children and their families in the preparation for, response to, and recovery from natural or man-made disasters. As members of the Coalition, we write to express support for provisions in your bill S.1630, the *Disaster Recovery Act of 2011*, which relate directly to children and families.

Children comprise nearly 25 percent of the population, yet in times of disaster their unique health and behavioral needs are frequently unmet or misunderstood. The National Commission on Children and Disasters was instrumental in identifying many gaps in Federal, state and local disaster planning and management for children. We commend the Obama Administration and especially FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate for making children a greater priority than in the past. In 2011, a remarkably active year for disasters, we've witnessed tangible progress toward the implementation of the Commission's 100+ recommendations and valuable lessons learned, both in terms of planning and field operations.

Our work, however, is far from finished and with the termination of the Commission, it has never been more important for Congress to codify the progress made, emphasize the delivery of disaster assistance and services to children, and ensure that future leaders and policymakers stay the course of making children a priority.

S.1630 accomplishes these goals in several ways. Your bill makes improvements to the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act that: gives special consideration to children for essential assistance, elevates child care to an essential and critical community service and provides for the establishment of temporary child care facilities, stipulates that housing sites determined by the President be accessible or convenient to schools and child care, establishes a single, comprehensive

The National Coalition on Children and Disasters advocates on behalf of policies that effectively ensure the well-being of children and their families in the preparation for, response to, and recovery from natural or man-made disasters in the United States.

Federal disaster case management system to facilitate rapid access to services, deems children a planning imperative for Federal, state and local government, and integrates schools and child care centers into evacuation plans and exercises.

All told, these provisions are major steps toward holding the Federal government and its partners accountable to considering and effectively meeting the disaster-related needs of children, now and in the future. By making children a priority, the *Disaster Recovery Act of 2011* will help ensure that families can move forward in rebuilding their lives in the aftermath of a disaster.

We look forward to working with you and your colleagues on maintaining these provisions in the bill as it moves through the legislative process. As always, thank you for your consideration and your continued leadership in support of our nation's 75 million children.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Red Cross

Children's Health Fund

Habitat for Humanity International

International Association of Emergency Medical Service Chiefs

National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies

National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners

National Association of School Psychologists

National Center for Disaster Preparedness

National Council on Crime and Delinquency

Save the Children

United States Breastfeeding Committee

The National Coalition on Children and Disasters advocates on behalf of policies that effectively ensure the well-being of children and their families in the preparation for, response to, and recovery from natural or man-made disasters in the United States.