



Families for Orphans Coalition NEWS

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The Families for Orphans Coalition Calls for Immediate Consideration of the Families For Orphans Act

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Adoption Council of America

ACHA

International Council on International Children's Services

Kidsave International

International Council For Adoption

Brookings Institute for Human Services/North American Source Center for Child Welfare

Brookings Institute for Orphan Advocacy

Adopting Families

Worldwide Orphan Foundation

The Families for Orphans Coalition was established in 2008 to support both domestic and foreign efforts that ensure every child lives, grows, and thrives in a safe, permanent, and loving family.

February 3, 2010, Washington, DC – In light of the tragedy in Haiti and to help meet the needs of the 30 million orphans worldwide, the Families for Orphans Coalition wrote to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and House Foreign Affairs Committee today to urge immediate consideration of the Families for Orphans Act (H.R. 3070 and S. 1458).

The chaos resulting from the January 12th earthquake in Haiti has emphasized the vulnerability of children and demonstrated the need for a focused global strategy addressing children living without parental care. If enacted, the Families for Orphans Act would create the Office of Orphan Policy, Diplomacy and Development within the Department of State responsible for implementing comprehensive strategies to encourage the preservation of biological families and help children without parental care find safe, legal, permanent families – ideally in their country of birth. It would also fund research to ascertain the number of children living without parental care worldwide -- the importance of which has been further underscored by the wide range of estimates and unknown number of Haiti's orphaned children. In addition, the Families for Orphans Act includes interventions such as family preservation, reunification, domestic adoption and intercountry adoption, if it is determined to be in the best interest of the child and a permanent family is not available domestically."

"When devastating natural disasters such as the earthquake in Haiti occur, we must act immediately to mitigate the impact on children by meeting their most basic need – permanent family care," the letter to Congress read. "If the office proposed in the Families for Orphans Act had been in existence prior to Haiti's earthquake, much of the current chaos surrounding the protection of Haiti's orphans could have been averted. Had the thousands of children who were known to have no parents or family able to care for them prior to the earthquake been documented, plans could have already been underway to find families for them through domestic or international adoption, instead of being relegated to what may be years in a refugee camp and a lifetime without parents. This tragedy is compounded because of the growing waiting lists of people with new awareness of the plight of these children who are interested in adopting them."

The earthquake in Haiti is the third catastrophic natural event in the past decade, after the Tsunami of 2004 and the devastating earthquake in China in 2008 that has left many thousands of children without a family of their own. The Families for Orphans Coalition stated that having the love and protection of a permanent family is a basic human right for every child. "It is time for the United States to take a stronger leadership role on behalf of all those children without parents who, whether through natural crisis, parental death, abuse, or neglect, are forced to face life alone and with little hope for a secure future," the letter read. "We cannot, and must not, turn our backs on these orphans."

There is a preponderance of research consistently proving that a nurturing, permanent family environment is the best predictor of a child's future prospects. Families are essential to the healthy development of children, and children who grow up without a family of their own are far more likely to experience homelessness, incomplete education, violence, teen pregnancy,