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April 27, 2010

The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye  
Chair  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Inouye and Ranking Member Cochran:

I write to express the strong support of the American Bar Association for increased federal investment in critical services to homeless children, youth, and families through the U.S. Department of Education's Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) programs.

In February 2010, the ABA House of Delegates approved a resolution recognizing the vulnerable condition of unaccompanied homeless youth and their exposure to physical violence and sexual exploitation in street environments. The ABA believes that the social crisis of youth homelessness could be abated with concerted planning and increased investment in family services, housing, and positive youth development.

The President has recommended level funding of \$116 million for RHYA and \$65 million for EHCY. The ABA urges you to increase appropriations for the only two federal programs targeted to these vulnerable populations; we recommend \$165 million in FY2011 for RHYA programs and \$140 million in FY2011 for the EHCY program.

### Education for Homeless Children and Youth

In the face of one of the worst economic crises in our nation's history, homelessness is affecting unprecedented numbers of children and youth. During the 2008-2009 school year, public schools enrolled over one million homeless children and youth – a 47 percent increase from the 2006-2007 school year. With homelessness comes a higher likelihood of multiple school transfers, missing school (truancy), dropout, and lower standardized test scores. That is

why homeless students often require additional supports if they are to be able to participate in any educational program. The most promising instructional strategy or academic program will be of little benefit to children and youth who have not been identified, who cannot get to school, or who are constantly changing schools due to the instability of their housing situation.

The EHCY program removes barriers to homeless student enrollment, attendance, and success in elementary and secondary education. Local school districts use EHCY funds for outreach and identification, enrollment assistance, transportation assistance, school records transfer, immunization referrals, tutoring, counseling, school supplies, assessment, professional development for educators, and referrals for community services. Despite the remarkable increase in the number of homeless youth and children seeking services in school settings, Congress appropriated only \$65.4 million for EHCY in FY2009 and again in FY2010.

In recognition of the tremendous increase in homeless students brought on by the recession, an additional \$70 million was provided last year through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) for a total funding of \$135.4 million for FY2009. As the economic downturn continues, an appropriation of \$140 million (\$70 million to meet the program's authorized funding level plus \$70 million to maintain progress made through ARRA) for EHCY is needed to ensure that school districts can continue to identify and assist children and youth experiencing homelessness.

#### Runaway and Homeless Youth Act

Our nation has failed to offer meaningful intervention and housing to homeless youth. In 2008, of the hundreds of thousands of youth reached through street outreach, fewer than 50,000 received a shelter bed and less than 4,000 were offered transitional housing.

The RHYA programs provide critical outreach, shelter, and transitional living resources to the nation's unaccompanied youth. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports that in 2009 over 5,200 homeless youth were turned away from a transitional living project or maternity group home due to a lack of space. This figure does not even begin to capture the number of homeless youth who are never referred to a RHYA residential project or who live in a community or region without one. Congress appropriated \$115 million in FY2009 and \$116 million in FY2010. The ABA recommends \$165 million – the authorized funding level – in FY11 for Runaway and Homeless Youth programs. The increased levels would assist more than 1,655 youth with stable housing, offer more than 17,000 youth emergency shelter services, and allow for more than 340,000 new street contacts to vulnerable youth in the United States each year.

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Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to working with you to fully support the Education for Homeless Children and Youth program and Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs and their missions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas M. Susman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Thomas M. Susman  
Director

cc: Members of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies