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The Honorable Pete Stark  
U.S. House of Representatives  
239 Cannon Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Representatives Stark:

I am writing on behalf of the American Bar Association to applaud your leadership for introducing the Foster Children Self-Support Act, legislation to ensure that foster children are able to use their social security and supplemental security income benefits to address their needs and improve their lives. The ABA strongly supports this legislation and believes its enactment will assist thousands of children in foster care throughout the United States to transition successfully from being wards of the state to becoming responsible and secure adults.

The ABA House of Delegates, our policy-making body, approved a resolution in February 2002 supporting enactment of legislation such as yours. That 2002 resolution urges enactment of legislation to strengthen the safeguards and protections for benefits for foster children under the Old Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance programs and the Supplemental Security Income program of the Social Security Act, for which representative payees had been designated. This policy also called for benefit payments received by these payees to be held for the exclusive use and welfare of the individual beneficiary, with a maximum effort to conserve any unused funds to meet the special and future needs of the beneficiary. In August 2007 the ABA called for comprehensive support and services for youth who age out of foster care, reaffirming among other things our February 2002 policy supporting child welfare agency implementation of steps to preserve every foster youth's Social Security Act entitlements and other financial assets for use directly by that youth.

The Foster Children Self-Support Act would implement these important steps -- steps that are vital to aiding many of our most vulnerable youth, who have been in foster care due to their abuse or neglect, to make successful transitions to adult independence. We look forward to working with you toward passage of this much-needed legislation.

Sincerely,



Thomas M. Susman