

Vulnerable Children and Families Act of 2017

S. 1178
H.R. 2532

Every day millions of children* all over the world are living without families. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimates that 13 million children have lost both parents and 8 million children are living in institutional care. Children in institutional care are some of the most vulnerable in the world. They are more likely to experience violence, sexual abuse, and suicide than children living in family based care. Once these children age out of institutional care, they are more likely to experience violence, incarceration, and unemployment. **Family is the bedrock of society and children need the permanent love, care, and protection of a family to grow into healthy, productive adults.**

Reason for Legislation

More can be done to ensure that our government is working in partnership with other countries to ensure that every child can grow up in a permanent, safe, nurturing, and loving family. In addition to its broader international child welfare mission, the Vulnerable Children and Families Act (VCF Act) ensures that intercountry adoption to the United States becomes a more viable and fully developed option for providing families for children in need. Since 2004, the number of international adoptions into the United States has decreased by 72 percent, and international adoptions worldwide have decreased by 50 percent.



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Vulnerable Children and Families Act (VCF Act)

- Ensures that international child welfare and efforts to provide permanent and safe homes for vulnerable children are a central part of international diplomacy and U.S. foreign policy within the State Department.
- Replaces the current Office of Children's Issues with an Office of Vulnerable Children and Family Security (VCFS). This office would build international capacity to implement effective child welfare systems, with particular focus on family preservation and reunification, and kinship, domestic, and intercountry adoption.
- Designates an Ambassador at Large (AAL) to oversee the Office of Vulnerable Children and Family Security. The Ambassador would require Senate confirmation, improving Congressional oversight for the office.
- Sets concurrent planning as the official United States policy to facilitate the appropriate and timely placement of children in permanent families.
- Creates a new annual report to Congress on the technical assistance being provided to foreign countries to promote family-based permanence under the Act.
- Strengthens coordination between VCFS, AAL, and the Special Advisor for Children in Adversity at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Ensures the two offices are working together to implement the objectives outlined in the 2012 Action Plan on Children in Adversity.

* http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/Keeping_Children_Out_of_Harmful_Institutions_Final_20.11.09_1.pdf

Endorsements

National Council For Adoption • Academy of Adoption and Assisted Reproduction Attorneys • Christian Alliance for Orphans • Harvard Law School Child Advocacy Program
Bethany Christian Services • Nourished Hearts • Center for Adoption Policy • Gladney Center for Adoption