

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 5336

To reauthorize child welfare programs under part B of title IV of the Social Security Act, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

NOVEMBER 18, 2024

Mr. CORNYN (for himself and Mr. BENNET) introduced the following bill;
which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Finance

A BILL

To reauthorize child welfare programs under part B of title
IV of the Social Security Act, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Protecting America’s
5 Children by Strengthening Families Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. REFERENCES.**

7 Except as otherwise expressly provided, wherever in
8 this Act an amendment or repeal is expressed in terms
9 of an amendment to, or repeal of, a section or other provi-

1 sion, the reference shall be considered to be made to that
 2 section or other provision of the Social Security Act.

3 **SEC. 3. TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

4 The table of contents of this Act is as follows:

- Sec. 1. Short title.
- Sec. 2. References.
- Sec. 3. Table of contents.
- Sec. 4. Reauthorization of child welfare programs.
- Sec. 5. Enhancements to the court improvement program.
- Sec. 6. Expanding regional partnership grants to address parental substance use disorder as cause of child removal.
- Sec. 7. Modernization; reducing administrative burden.
- Sec. 8. Streamlining funding for Indian tribes.
- Sec. 9. Accelerating access to Family First prevention services.
- Sec. 10. Strengthening support for youth aging out of foster care.
- Sec. 11. Recognizing the importance of relative and kinship caregivers.
- Sec. 12. Avoiding neglect by addressing poverty.
- Sec. 13. Strengthening support for caseworkers.
- Sec. 14. Demonstration projects for improving relationships between incarcerated parents and children in foster care.
- Sec. 15. Guidance to States on improving data collection and reporting for youth in residential treatment programs.
- Sec. 16. Streamlining research, training, and technical assistance funding.
- Sec. 17. Report on post adoption and subsidized guardianship services.
- Sec. 18. Effective date.

5 **SEC. 4. REAUTHORIZATION OF CHILD WELFARE PRO-**
 6 **GRAMS.**

7 (a) REAUTHORIZATION OF SUBPART 1; DISCRE-
 8 TIONARY FUNDING.—Section 425 (42 U.S.C. 625) is
 9 amended by striking “2017 through 2023” and inserting
 10 “2025 through 2029”.

11 (b) REAUTHORIZATION OF SUBPART 2; ENHANCED
 12 SUPPORT.—Section 436(a) (42 U.S.C. 629f(a)) is amend-
 13 ed by striking “each of fiscal years 2017 through 2023”
 14 and inserting “fiscal year 2025 and \$420,000,000 for
 15 each of fiscal years 2026 through 2029”.

1 (c) REAUTHORIZATION OF SUBPART 2; DISCRE-
 2 TIONARY FUNDING.—Section 437(a) (42 U.S.C. 629g(a))
 3 is amended by striking “2017 through 2023” and insert-
 4 ing “2025 through 2029”.

5 (d) FUNDING LIMITATION.—Section 423(a)(2)(A)
 6 (42 U.S.C. 623(a)(2)(A)) is amended by inserting “, not
 7 to exceed \$10,000,000” before the semicolon.

8 **SEC. 5. ENHANCEMENTS TO THE COURT IMPROVEMENT**
 9 **PROGRAM.**

10 (a) INCREASE IN RESERVATION OF FUNDS.—Section
 11 436(b)(2) (42 U.S.C. 629f(b)(2)) is amended by inserting
 12 “for fiscal year 2025 and \$40,000,000 for fiscal year 2026
 13 and each succeeding fiscal year” before “for grants”.

14 (b) EXTENSION OF STATE MATCH REQUIREMENT.—
 15 Section 438(d) (42 U.S.C. 629h(d)) is amended by strik-
 16 ing “2017 through 2023” and inserting “2025 through
 17 2029”.

18 (c) PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS.—Section 438(a) (42
 19 U.S.C. 629h(a)) is amended—

20 (1) in paragraph (1), by adding at the end the
 21 following:

22 “(F) that determine the appropriateness
 23 and best practices for use of technology to con-
 24 duct remote hearings, subject to participant
 25 consent, including to ensure maximum partici-

1 pation of individuals involved in proceedings
 2 and to enable courts to maintain operations in
 3 times of public health or other emergencies;”;

4 (2) in paragraph (2)(C), by striking “per-
 5 sonnel.” and inserting “personnel and supporting
 6 optimal use of remote hearing technology; and”; and

7 (3) by adding at the end the following:

8 “(3) to ensure continuity of needed court serv-
 9 ices, prevent disruption of the services, and enable
 10 their recovery from threats such as public health cri-
 11 ses, natural disasters or cyberattacks, including
 12 through—

13 “(A) support for technology that allows
 14 court proceedings to occur remotely subject to
 15 participant consent, including hearings and
 16 legal representation;

17 “(B) the development of guidance and pro-
 18 tocols for responding to the occurrences and co-
 19 ordinating with other agencies; and

20 “(C) other activities carried out to ensure
 21 backup systems are in place.”.

22 (d) IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE ON SHARING BEST
 23 PRACTICES FOR TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGES NEEDED FOR
 24 REMOTE COURT PROCEEDINGS FOR FOSTER CARE OR

1 ADOPTION.—Section 438 (42 U.S.C. 629h) is amended by
2 adding at the end the following:

3 “(e) GUIDANCE.—

4 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Every 5 years, the Sec-
5 retary shall issue implementation guidance for shar-
6 ing information on best practices for—

7 “(A) technological changes needed for
8 court proceedings for foster care, guardianship,
9 or adoption to be conducted remotely in a way
10 that maximizes engagement and protects the
11 privacy of participants; and

12 “(B) the manner in which the proceedings
13 should be conducted.

14 “(2) INITIAL ISSUANCE.—The Secretary shall
15 issue initial guidance required by paragraph (1) with
16 preliminary information on best practices not later
17 than October 1, 2025.

18 “(3) ADDITIONAL CONSULTATION.—The Sec-
19 retary shall consult with Indian tribes on the devel-
20 opment of appropriate guidelines for State court
21 proceedings involving Indian children to maximize
22 engagement of Indian tribes and provide appropriate
23 guidelines on conducting State court proceedings
24 subject to the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (25
25 U.S.C. 1901 et seq.).”.

1 **SEC. 6. EXPANDING REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP GRANTS TO**
 2 **ADDRESS PARENTAL SUBSTANCE USE DIS-**
 3 **ORDER AS CAUSE OF CHILD REMOVAL.**

4 (a) INCREASE IN RESERVATION OF FUNDS.—Section
 5 436(b)(5) (42 U.S.C. 629f(b)(5)) is amended by striking
 6 “each of fiscal years 2017 through 2023” and inserting
 7 “fiscal year 2025 and \$30,000,000 for fiscal year 2026
 8 and each succeeding fiscal year”.

9 (b) REAUTHORIZATION.—Section 437(f) (42 U.S.C.
 10 629g(f)) is amended—

11 (1) in paragraph (3)(A)—

12 (A) by striking “In addition to amounts
 13 authorized to be appropriated to carry out this
 14 section, the” and inserting “The”; and

15 (B) by striking “2017 through 2023” and
 16 inserting “2025 through 2029”; and

17 (2) in paragraph (10), by striking “for each of
 18 fiscal years 2017 through 2023”.

19 (c) AUTHORITY TO WAIVE PLANNING PHASE.—Sec-
 20 tion 437(f)(3)(B)(iii) (42 U.S.C. 629g(f)(3)(B)(iii)) is
 21 amended—

22 (1) by striking all that precedes “grant award-
 23 ed” and inserting the following:

24 “(iii) SUFFICIENT PLANNING.—

25 “(I) IN GENERAL.—A”; and

1 (2) by striking “may not exceed \$250,000,
2 and”; and

3 (3) by adding after and below the end the fol-
4 lowing:

5 “(II) EXCEPTION.—The Sec-
6 retary, on a case-by-case basis, may
7 waive the planning phase for a part-
8 nership that demonstrates that the
9 partnership has engaged in sufficient
10 planning before submitting an appli-
11 cation for a grant under this sub-
12 section.”.

13 (d) EXPANDING AVAILABILITY OF EVIDENCE-BASED
14 SERVICES.—

15 (1) IN GENERAL.—Section 437(f)(1) (42 U.S.C.
16 629g(f)(1)) is amended by inserting “, and expand
17 the scope of the evidence-based services that may be
18 approved by the clearinghouse established under sec-
19 tion 476(d)” before the period.

20 (2) CONSIDERATIONS FOR AWARDING
21 GRANTS.—Section 437(f)(7) (42 U.S.C. 629g(f)(7))
22 is amended—

23 (A) by striking “and” at the end of sub-
24 paragraph (D);

1 (B) by striking the period at the end of
 2 subparagraph (E) and inserting “; and”; and

3 (C) by adding at the end the following:

4 “(F) have submitted information pursuant
 5 to paragraph (4)(F) that demonstrates the ca-
 6 pability to participate in rigorous evaluation of
 7 program effectiveness.”.

8 (e) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ON USING REGIONAL
 9 PARTNERSHIP GRANT FUNDS IN COORDINATION WITH
 10 OTHER FEDERAL FUNDS TO BETTER SERVE FAMILIES
 11 AFFECTED BY A SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER.—Section
 12 435(d) (42 U.S.C. 629e(d)) is amended—

13 (1) by striking “and” at the end of paragraph
 14 (4);

15 (2) by striking the period at the end of para-
 16 graph (5) and inserting “; and”; and

17 (3) by adding at the end the following:

18 “(6) use grants under section 437(f) in coordi-
 19 nation with other Federal funds to better serve fami-
 20 lies in the child welfare system that are affected by
 21 a substance use disorder.”.

22 (f) PERFORMANCE INDICATORS.—Section
 23 437(f)(8)(A) (42 U.S.C. 629g(f)(8)(A)) is amended in the
 24 1st sentence—

1 (1) by striking “this subsection” the 1st place
 2 it appears and inserting “the Protecting America’s
 3 Children by Strengthening Families Act”;

4 (2) by inserting “child permanency, reunifica-
 5 tion, re-entry into care,” before “parental recovery”;
 6 and

7 (3) by inserting “, and access to services for
 8 families with substance use disorder, including those
 9 with children who are overrepresented in foster care,
 10 difficult to place, or have disproportionately low per-
 11 manency rates” before the period.

12 (g) PERFORMANCE INDICATOR CONSULTATION RE-
 13 QUIRED.—Section 437(f)(8)(B) (42 U.S.C.
 14 629g(f)(8)(B)) is amended by redesignating clause (iii) as
 15 clause (iv) and inserting after clause (ii) the following:

16 “(iii) The Administrator of the Na-
 17 tional Institute on Drug Abuse.”.

18 (h) REPORTS TO CONGRESS.—Section 437(f)(9)(B)
 19 (42 U.S.C. 629g(f)(9)(B)) is amended—

20 (1) by striking “and” at the end of clause (ii);

21 (2) by striking the period at the end of clause

22 (iii) and inserting “; and”; and

23 (3) by adding at the end the following:

24 “(iv) whether any programs funded by
 25 the grants were submitted to the clearing-

1 house established under section 476(d) for
 2 review and the results of any such re-
 3 view.”.

4 (i) PRIORITY FOR STATEWIDE SERVICE GROWTH.—
 5 Section 437(f)(7) (42 U.S.C. 629g(f)(7)), as amended by
 6 subsection (d)(2) of this section, is amended—

7 (1) by striking “and” at the end of subpara-
 8 graph (E);

9 (2) by striking the period at the end of sub-
 10 paragraph (F) and inserting “; and”; and

11 (3) by adding at the end the following:

12 “(G) are a State or public agency, or out-
 13 line a plan to increase the availability of serv-
 14 ices funded under the grant statewide.”.

15 (j) ADDITION OF JUVENILE COURT AS REQUIRED
 16 PARTNER.—Section 437(f)(2)(A) (42 U.S.C.
 17 629g(f)(2)(A)) is amended by adding at the end the fol-
 18 lowing:

19 “(iii) The most appropriate adminis-
 20 trative office of the juvenile court or State
 21 court overseeing court proceedings involv-
 22 ing families who come to the attention of
 23 the court due to child abuse or neglect.”.

24 (k) ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL PARTNER.—Section
 25 437(f)(2)(C) (42 U.S.C. 629g(f)(2)(C)) is amended by re-

1 designating clause (ix) as clause (x) and inserting after
 2 clause (viii) the following:

3 “(ix) State or local agencies that ad-
 4 minister Federal health care, housing, fam-
 5 ily support, or other related programs.”.

6 (l) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

7 (1) Section 437(f)(2)(D) (42 U.S.C.
 8 629g(f)(2)(D)) is amended—

9 (A) by adding “and” at the end of clause
 10 (i);

11 (B) by striking “; and” at the end of
 12 clause (ii) and inserting a period; and

13 (C) by striking clause (iii).

14 (2) Section 437(f)(2) (42 U.S.C. 629g(f)(2)) is
 15 amended by striking subparagraph (B) and redesign-
 16 ating subparagraphs (C) and (D) as subparagraphs
 17 (B) and (C), respectively.

18 **SEC. 7. MODERNIZATION; REDUCING ADMINISTRATIVE**
 19 **BURDEN.**

20 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 431 (42 U.S.C. 629a) is
 21 amended by adding at the end the following:

22 “(c) USE OF TECHNOLOGY.—

23 “(1) USE OF PORTAL.—The services referred to
 24 in subsection (a) may include the means of access to
 25 and use of an electronic or digital portal to facilitate

1 the provision of community support to care for and
 2 meet specific needs of families and children.

3 “(2) LIMITATION.—Such a portal shall not re-
 4 tain or share personally identifiable information
 5 about a beneficiary without consent or for any pur-
 6 pose other than referral.”.

7 (b) ALLOWING SUPPORT FOR FAMILY RESOURCE
 8 CENTERS.—Section 431(a) (42 U.S.C. 629a(a)) is amend-
 9 ed—

10 (1) in paragraph (2)(A), by inserting “, includ-
 11 ing services provided by family resource centers,”
 12 before “designed”; and

13 (2) by adding at the end the following:

14 “(10) FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER.—

15 “(A) IN GENERAL.—The term ‘family re-
 16 source center’ means a community or school-
 17 based hub of support services for families
 18 that—

19 “(i) utilizes an approach that is multi-
 20 generational, strengths-based, and family-
 21 centered;

22 “(ii) reflects, and is responsive to,
 23 community needs and interests;

24 “(iii) provides support at no or low
 25 cost for participants; and

1 “(iv) builds communities of peer sup-
 2 port for families, including kinship fami-
 3 lies, to develop social connections that re-
 4 duce isolation and stress.

5 “(B) SPECIAL RULE.—For purposes of
 6 this subpart, an expenditure for a service pro-
 7 vided by a family resource center may be treat-
 8 ed as an expenditure for any 1 or more of fam-
 9 ily support services, family preservation serv-
 10 ices, family reunification services, or adoption
 11 promotion and support services as long as the
 12 expenditure is related to serving the children
 13 and families in the specified category and con-
 14 sistent with the overall purpose of the cat-
 15 egory.”.

16 (c) UPDATING STATE PLAN REQUIREMENT.—Sec-
 17 tion 422(b)(1) (42 U.S.C. 622(b)(1)) is amended to read
 18 as follows:

19 “(1) provide that a State agency will administer
 20 or supervise the administration of the plan under
 21 this subpart;”.

22 (d) ACCESS TO LEGAL REPRESENTATION.—Section
 23 422(b)(4) (42 U.S.C. 622(b)(4)) is amended—

24 (1) by striking “and” at the end of subpara-
 25 graph (A);

1 (2) by adding “and” at the end of subpara-
 2 graph (B); and

3 (3) by adding at the end the following:

4 “(C) the steps that the State will take to
 5 ensure that, with respect to any judicial pro-
 6 ceeding involving a child and in which there is
 7 an allegation of child abuse or neglect, includ-
 8 ing a proceeding on dependency, adoption,
 9 guardianship, or termination of parental rights,
 10 information about available independent legal
 11 representation is provided to—

12 “(i) the child, as appropriate; and

13 “(ii) any individual who is a parent or
 14 guardian, or has legal custody, of the
 15 child;”.

16 (e) SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-
 17 BEING OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE.—Section
 18 422(b)(15)(A) (42 U.S.C. 622(b)(15) is amended—

19 (1) in the matter preceding clause (i)—

20 (A) by inserting “and, if applicable, the
 21 State agency responsible for mental health serv-
 22 ices,” before “and in consultation”; and

23 (B) by inserting “mental health pro-
 24 viders,” before “other experts”;

1 (2) in clause (ii), by inserting “a list of services
2 provided to support the physical and” before “emo-
3 tional”;

4 (3) in clause (iv), by inserting “and mental
5 health” before “services”;

6 (4) in clause (v), by inserting “, informed con-
7 sent of youth, and compliance with professional
8 practice guidelines” before the semicolon; and

9 (5) in clause (vi), by inserting “, licensed men-
10 tal health providers,” before “or other”.

11 (f) REDUCTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN.—

12 (1) IN GENERAL.—Subpart 3 of part B of title
13 IV (42 U.S.C. 629m) is amended by redesignating
14 section 440 as section 443 and inserting before such
15 section the following:

16 **“SEC. 441. REDUCTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN.**

17 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall reduce the
18 burden of administering this part imposed on the recipi-
19 ents of funds under this part, by—

20 “(1) reviewing and revising administrative data
21 collection instruments and forms to eliminate dupli-
22 cation and streamline reporting requirements for the
23 recipients while collecting all data required under
24 this part;

1 “(2) in coordination with activities required
2 under the Paperwork Reduction Act, conducting an
3 analysis of the total number of hours reported by
4 the recipients to comply with paperwork require-
5 ments and exploring, in consultation with the recipi-
6 ents, how to reduce the number of hours required
7 for the compliance by at least 15 percent;

8 “(3) collecting input from the recipients with
9 respect to fiscal and oversight requirements and
10 making changes to ensure consistency with stand-
11 ards and guidelines for other Federal formula grant
12 programs based on the input; and

13 “(4) respecting the sovereignty of Indian tribes
14 when complying with this subsection.

15 “(b) LIMITATION ON APPLICABILITY.—Subsection
16 (a) of this section shall not apply to any reporting or data
17 collection otherwise required by law that would affect the
18 ability of the Secretary to monitor and ensure compliance
19 with State plans approved under this part or ensure that
20 funds are expended consistent with this part.

21 **“SEC. 442. PUBLIC ACCESS TO STATE PLANS.**

22 “The Secretary shall—

23 “(1) create a standardized format for State
24 plans required under sections 422 and 432 used to
25 monitor compliance with those sections;

1 “(2) produce comparisons and analyses of
2 trends in State plans to inform future technical as-
3 sistance and policy development;

4 “(3) make the State plans available on a public
5 website; and

6 “(4) include on the website aggregated national
7 summaries of State submissions as the Secretary
8 deems appropriate.”.

9 (2) IMPLEMENTATION.—Within 2 years after
10 the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary
11 of Health and Human Services shall—

12 (A) comply with section 441 of the Social
13 Security Act, as added by the amendment made
14 by paragraph (1); and

15 (B) notify each recipient of funds under
16 part B of title IV of the Social Security Act of
17 any change made by the Secretary pursuant to
18 such section affecting the recipient.

19 (3) REPORT.—Within 3 years after the date of
20 the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Health
21 and Human Services shall submit to the Committee
22 on Ways and Means of the House of Representatives
23 and the Committee on Finance of the Senate a re-
24 port describing the efforts of the Secretary to com-
25 ply with section 441 of the Social Security Act, as

1 added by the amendment made by paragraph (1), in-
 2 cluding the specific actions to comply with each
 3 paragraph of such section.

4 (g) PRIMARY PREVENTION PARTNERS.—Section
 5 435(a)(2)(B) (42 U.S.C. 429e(a)(2)(B)) is amended by in-
 6 serting “including community-based partners with exper-
 7 tise in preventing unnecessary child welfare system in-
 8 volvement” before the semicolon.

9 **SEC. 8. STREAMLINING FUNDING FOR INDIAN TRIBES.**

10 (a) SUBPART 1.—

11 (1) TRIBAL SET-ASIDE; DIRECT PAYMENTS TO
 12 TRIBES; EXEMPTIVE AUTHORITY.—

13 (A) IN GENERAL.—Section 428 (42 U.S.C.
 14 628) is amended by striking subsections (a) and
 15 (b) and inserting the following:

16 “(a) RESERVATION OF FUNDS; DIRECT PAY-
 17 MENTS.—Out of any amount appropriated pursuant to
 18 section 425 for a fiscal year, the Secretary shall reserve
 19 3 percent for grants to Indian tribes and tribal organiza-
 20 tions, which shall be paid directly to Indian tribes and
 21 tribal organizations with a plan approved under this sub-
 22 part, in accordance with section 433(a).”.

23 (B) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section
 24 423(a) (42 U.S.C. 623(a)) is amended by strik-
 25 ing “the sum appropriated pursuant to section

1 425 for each fiscal year” and inserting “for
 2 each fiscal year, the sum appropriated pursuant
 3 to section 425 remaining after applying section
 4 428(a)”.

5 (C) TECHNICAL AMENDMENT.—Section
 6 428(c) (42 U.S.C. 628(c)) is amended by strik-
 7 ing “450b” and inserting “5304”.

8 (2) IMPROVING COMPLIANCE WITH THE INDIAN
 9 CHILD WELFARE ACT.—

10 (A) STATE PLAN REQUIREMENT.—Section
 11 422(b)(9) (42 U.S.C. 622(b)(9)) is amended by
 12 striking “Act;” and inserting “Act of 1978, in-
 13 cluding how the State will ensure timely notice
 14 to Indian tribes of State custody proceedings
 15 involving Indian children, foster care or adop-
 16 tive placements of Indian children, and case
 17 recordkeeping as such matters relate to trans-
 18 fers of jurisdiction, termination of parental
 19 rights, and active efforts;”.

20 (B) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—Subpart 1
 21 of part B of title IV (42 U.S.C. 621 et seq.) is
 22 amended by adding at the end the following:

1 **“SEC. 429B. EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INDIAN**
2 **CHILD WELFARE ACT OF 1978.**

3 “(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than October 1, 2025,
4 the Secretary, in consultation with Indian tribal organiza-
5 tions and States, shall develop a plan and provide tech-
6 nical assistance supporting effective implementation of the
7 Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, including specific meas-
8 ures identified in State plans as required by section
9 422(b)(9) of this Act. The technical assistance plan shall
10 be based on data sufficient to assess State strengths and
11 areas for improvement in implementing Federal standards
12 established under the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978,
13 including, at a minimum, the following:

14 “(1) Timely identification of Indian children
15 and extended family members.

16 “(2) Timely tribal notice of State child custody
17 proceedings involving an Indian child.

18 “(3) Reports of cases in which a transfer of ju-
19 risdiction (as defined under the Indian Child Wel-
20 fare Act of 1978) was granted or was not granted,
21 and reasons specified for denial in cases where
22 transfer was denied.

23 “(4) In cases in which a State court orders a
24 foster care placement of an Indian child, whether re-
25 quirements for active efforts to prevent the breakup

1 of the Indian family, testimony of a qualified expert
2 witness, and evidentiary standards were met.

3 “(5) Whether an Indian child was placed in a
4 placement that is required to be preferred under the
5 Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, and if not, the
6 reasons specified.

7 “(6) In cases in which a State court orders the
8 termination of parental rights to an Indian child,
9 whether requirements for active efforts to prevent
10 the breakup of the Indian family, testimony of a
11 qualified expert witness, and evidentiary standards
12 were met.

13 “(b) INTERAGENCY COORDINATION.—On request of
14 the Secretary, the Secretary of the Interior shall provide
15 the Secretary with such guidance and assistance as may
16 be necessary to facilitate informing States and public child
17 welfare agencies on how to comply with the Indian Child
18 Welfare Act of 1978, including specific measures identi-
19 fied in State plans as required by section 422(b)(9) of this
20 Act.

21 “(c) BIENNIAL REPORTS TO CONGRESS.—The Sec-
22 retary shall biennially submit to the Committee on Ways
23 and Means of the House of Representatives and the Com-
24 mittee on Finance of the Senate a written report on how—

1 “(1) the States are complying with the Indian
2 Child Welfare Act of 1978 and section 422(b)(9) of
3 this Act, as informed by data collected under this
4 section; and

5 “(2) the Secretary is assisting States and In-
6 dian tribes to improve implementation of Federal
7 standards established under the Indian Child Wel-
8 fare Act of 1978.”.

9 (3) REPORTING REQUIREMENTS; ADMINISTRA-
10 TIVE COSTS.—

11 (A) IN GENERAL.—Section 428 (42 U.S.C.
12 628) is amended by redesignating subsection (c)
13 as subsection (d) and inserting before such sub-
14 section the following:

15 “(b) AUTHORITY TO STREAMLINE REPORTING RE-
16 QUIREMENTS.—The Secretary shall, in consultation with
17 the affected Indian tribes, modify any reporting require-
18 ment imposed by or under this part on an Indian tribe,
19 tribal organization, or tribal consortium if the total of the
20 amounts allotted to the Indian tribe, tribal organization,
21 or tribal consortium under this part for the fiscal year is
22 not more than \$50,000, and in a manner that limits the
23 administrative burden on any tribe to which not more than
24 \$50,000 is allotted under this subpart for the fiscal year.

1 “(c) TRIBAL AUTHORITY TO SUBSTITUTE THE FED-
 2 ERAL NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATE FOR ADMINIS-
 3 TRATIVE COSTS CAP.—For purposes of sections
 4 422(b)(14) and 424(e), an Indian tribal organization may
 5 elect to have the weighted average of the indirect cost
 6 rates in effect under part 220 of title 2, Code of Federal
 7 Regulations with respect to the administrative costs of the
 8 Indian tribal organization apply in lieu of the percentage
 9 specified in each such section.”.

10 (B) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Section
 11 431(a) (42 U.S.C. 629a(a)) is amended in each
 12 of paragraphs (5) and (6) by striking “428(c)”
 13 and inserting “428(d)”.

14 (b) SUBPART 2.—

15 (1) TRIBAL PLAN EXEMPTION.—Section
 16 432(b)(2)(B) (42 U.S.C. 629b(b)(2)(B)) is amend-
 17 ed—

18 (A) by striking “section 433(a)” the 1st
 19 place it appears and inserting “sections 433(a)
 20 and 437(c)(1) combined”; and

21 (B) by striking “section 433(a)” the 2nd
 22 place it appears and inserting “such sections”.

23 (2) APPLICATION OF TRIBAL SET-ASIDE BE-
 24 FORE OTHER SET-ASIDES.—Section 436(b)(3) (42
 25 U.S.C. 429f(b)(3)) is amended by striking “After

1 applying paragraphs (4) and (5) (but before apply-
 2 ing paragraphs (1) or (2)), the” and inserting
 3 “The”.

4 (3) INCREASE IN FUNDING FOR TRIBAL COURT
 5 IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM.—Section 438(c)(3) (42
 6 U.S.C. 629h(c)(3)) is amended by inserting “for fis-
 7 cal year 2025, and \$2,000,000 for each of fiscal
 8 years 2026 through 2029,” before “for grants”.

9 **SEC. 9. ACCELERATING ACCESS TO FAMILY FIRST PREVEN-**
 10 **TION SERVICES.**

11 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 435 (42 U.S.C. 629e) is
 12 amended by adding at the end the following:

13 “(f) PREVENTION SERVICES EVALUATION PARTNER-
 14 SHIPS.—

15 “(1) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this subsection
 16 is to authorize the Secretary to make competitive
 17 grants to support the timely evaluation of—

18 “(A) services and programs described in
 19 section 471(e); or

20 “(B) kinship navigator programs described
 21 in section 474(a)(7).

22 “(2) GRANTS.—In accordance with applications
 23 approved under this subsection, the Secretary may
 24 make grants, on a competitive basis, to eligible enti-
 25 ties to carry out projects designed to evaluate a serv-

ice or program provided by the eligible entity, or an entity in partnership with the eligible entity, with respect to the requirements for a promising practice, supported practice, or well-supported practice described in section 471(e)(4)(C).

“(3) APPLICATIONS.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity may apply to the Secretary for a grant under this subsection to carry out a project that meets the following requirements:

“(i) The project is designed in accordance with paragraph (2).

“(ii) The project is to be carried out by the applicant in partnership with—

“(I) a State agency that administers, or supervises the administration of, the State plan approved under part E, or an agency administering the plan under the supervision of the State agency; and

“(II) if the applicant is unable or unwilling to do so, at least 1 external evaluator to carry out the evaluation of the service or program provided by the applicant.

1 “(B) CONTENTS.—The application shall
2 contain the following:

3 “(i) A description of the project, in-
4 cluding—

5 “(I) a statement explaining why
6 a grant is necessary to carry out the
7 project; and

8 “(II) the amount of grant funds
9 that would be disbursed to each entity
10 described in subparagraph (A)(ii) in
11 partnership with the applicant.

12 “(ii) A certification from each entity
13 described in subparagraph (A)(ii) that pro-
14 vides assurances that the individual or en-
15 tity is in partnership with the applicant
16 and will fulfill the responsibilities of the
17 entity specified in the description provided
18 pursuant to clause (i) of this subpara-
19 graph.

20 “(iii) A certification from the appli-
21 cant that provides assurances that the ap-
22 plicant intends to comply with subpara-
23 graph (A)(ii)(II), if applicable.

24 “(iv) At the option of the eligible enti-
25 ty, a certification from the applicant that

1 the applicant requires an external eval-
2 uator secured by the Secretary pursuant to
3 paragraph (5), if applicable.

4 “(4) PRIORITIES.—In approving applications
5 under this subsection, the Secretary shall prioritize
6 the following:

7 “(A) Addressing, with respect to the clear-
8 inghouse of practices described in section
9 476(d)(2), deficiencies or gaps identified by the
10 Secretary in consultation with—

11 “(i) States, political subdivisions of a
12 State, and tribal communities carrying out,
13 or receiving the benefits of, a service or
14 program; and

15 “(ii) child welfare experts, including
16 individuals with lived experience.

17 “(B) Maximizing the number of evidence-
18 based services or programs to be included in the
19 clearinghouse of practices described in section
20 476(d)(2).

21 “(C) Timely completion of evaluations and
22 the production of evidence.

23 “(D) Supporting services or programs that
24 are based on, or are adaptations to new popu-
25 lation settings of, a service or program with re-

1 liable evidence about the benefits and risks of
2 the service or program.

3 “(5) AVAILABILITY OF EXTERNAL EVAL-
4 UATORS.—

5 “(A) IN GENERAL.—Before accepting ap-
6 plications under this subsection, the Secretary
7 shall make reasonable efforts to identify at least
8 1 entity to serve as an external evaluator for
9 any eligible entity that includes a certification
10 under paragraph (3)(B)(iv) with an application
11 under this subsection.

12 “(B) NO EFFECT ON CONSIDERATION OF
13 APPLICATION.—The Secretary may not consider
14 whether an eligible entity is in partnership with
15 an external evaluator described in paragraph
16 (A) in approving an application under this sub-
17 section submitted by the eligible entity.

18 “(6) REPORTS.—

19 “(A) BY GRANT RECIPIENTS.—Within 1
20 year after receiving a grant under this sub-
21 section, and every year thereafter for the next
22 5 years, the grant recipient shall submit to the
23 Secretary a written report on—

24 “(i) the use of grant funds;

1 “(ii) whether the program or service
2 evaluated by the project meets a require-
3 ment specified in section 471(e)(4)(C), in-
4 cluding information about—

5 “(I) how the program or service
6 is being carried out in accordance
7 with standards specified in the re-
8 quirement;

9 “(II) any outcomes of the pro-
10 gram or service; and

11 “(III) any outcome with respect
12 to which the service or program com-
13 pares favorably to a comparison prac-
14 tice; and

15 “(iii) whether the Secretary has in-
16 cluded the program or service in an update
17 to the clearinghouse of practices described
18 in section 476(d)(2).

19 “(B) BY THE SECRETARY.—The Secretary
20 shall submit to the Committee on Ways and
21 Means of the House of Representatives and to
22 the Committee on Finance of the Senate an an-
23 nual written report on—

24 “(i) the grants awarded under this
25 subsection;

1 “(ii) the programs funded by the
2 grants;

3 “(iii) any technical assistance pro-
4 vided by the Secretary in carrying out this
5 subsection, including with respect to the
6 efforts to secure external evaluators pursu-
7 ant to paragraph (5); and

8 “(iv) any efforts by the Secretary to
9 support program evaluation and review
10 pursuant to section 471(e) and inclusion of
11 programs in the pre-approved list of serv-
12 ices and programs described in section
13 471(e)(4)(D) or the clearinghouse of prac-
14 tices described in section 476(d)(2).

15 “(7) FUNDING.—

16 “(A) LIMITATIONS.—Of the amounts avail-
17 able to carry out this subsection, the Secretary
18 may use not more than 5 percent to provide
19 technical assistance.

20 “(B) CARRYOVER.—Amounts made avail-
21 able to carry out this subsection shall remain
22 available until expended.

23 “(8) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

24 “(A) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term ‘eligi-
25 ble entity’ means any of the following providing

a service or program or, in the sole determination of the Secretary, able to provide a service or program if awarded a grant under this subsection:

“(i) A State, a political subdivision of a State, or an agency or department of a State or political subdivision of a State.

“(ii) An entity described in subparagraph (A) or (B) of section 426(a)(1).

“(iii) An Indian tribe or tribal organization.

“(B) EXTERNAL EVALUATOR.—The term ‘external evaluator’ means an entity with the ability and willingness to evaluate a service or program pursuant to paragraph (2) that is not provided by the entity.

“(C) SERVICE OR PROGRAM.—The term ‘service or program’—

“(i) means a service or program described in section 471(e); and

“(ii) includes a kinship navigator program described in section 474(a)(7).”.

(b) FUNDING.—Section 437(b) (42 U.S.C. 629g(b))

is amended by adding at the end the following:

1 “(5) PREVENTIVE SERVICES EVALUATION
 2 PARTNERSHIPS.—The Secretary shall reserve
 3 \$5,000,000 for grants under section 435(f) for each
 4 of fiscal years 2026 through 2029.”.

5 **SEC. 10. STRENGTHENING SUPPORT FOR YOUTH AGING**
 6 **OUT OF FOSTER CARE.**

7 (a) CASEWORKER VISITS.—Section 422(b)(17) (42
 8 U.S.C. 622(b)(17)) is amended by inserting “, and include
 9 a description of how the State may offer virtual case-
 10 worker visits to youth in care who have attained the age
 11 of 18 years and provided informed consent for virtual vis-
 12 its” before the semicolon.

13 (b) YOUTH AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN CHILD
 14 WELFARE PROGRAM PLANNING.—Section 432(b)(1) (42
 15 U.S.C. 629b(b)(1)) is amended to read as follows:

16 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall ap-
 17 prove a plan that meets the requirements of sub-
 18 section (a) only if—

19 “(A) the plan was developed jointly by the
 20 Secretary and the State, and the State, in de-
 21 veloping the plan, consulted with—

22 “(i) appropriate public and nonprofit
 23 private agencies;

24 “(ii) community-based organizations
 25 involved in providing services for children

and families in the areas of family preservation, family support, family reunification, foster care, kinship, and adoption promotion and support;

“(iii) parents with child welfare experience, foster parents, adoptive parents, and kinship caregivers; and

“(iv) children, youth, and young adults with experience in the child welfare system, including State boards and councils comprised of youth with lived experience who represent the diversity of children in the State to whom the plan would apply; and

“(B) the State has made publicly accessible on a website of the State agency a report that outlines how the State has implemented the suggestions of the children and youth referred to in subparagraph (A)(iv).”.

**SEC. 11. RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIVE
AND KINSHIP CAREGIVERS.**

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 431(a) (42 U.S.C. 629a(a)), as amended by section 7(b)(2) of this Act, is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)—

1 (A) in the matter preceding subparagraph

2 (A)—

3 (i) by striking “children” and insert-
4 ing “children, youth,”; and

5 (ii) by striking “adoptive and ex-
6 tended” and inserting “kinship and adop-
7 tive”;

8 (B) in subparagraph (D), by striking “par-
9 ents and other caregivers (including foster par-
10 ents)” and inserting “parents, kinship care-
11 givers, and foster parents”;

12 (C) by striking “and” at the end of sub-
13 paragraph (E);

14 (D) by striking the period at the end of
15 subparagraph (F) and inserting “ ; and”; and

16 (E) by adding at the end the following:

17 “(G)(i) peer-to-peer mentoring and support
18 programs with demonstrated experience fos-
19 tering constructive relationships between chil-
20 dren and families and mentors with relevant
21 lived experience or interactions with the child
22 welfare system; and

23 “(ii) for purposes of this subpart, an ex-
24 penditure for a service described in clause (i)
25 may be treated as an expenditure for any 1 or

1 more of family support services, family preser-
 2 vation services, family reunification services, or
 3 adoption promotion and support services, as
 4 long as the expenditure is related to serving the
 5 children and families in the specified category
 6 and consistent with the overall purpose of the
 7 category.”;

8 (2) in paragraph (2)(B)—

9 (A) in clause (i), by striking “children”
 10 and inserting “children, youth,”; and

11 (B) in clause (ii), by striking “extended”
 12 and inserting “kinship”;

13 (3) in paragraph (7)(A), by inserting “with kin-
 14 ship caregivers or” before “in a foster family home”;
 15 and

16 (4) by adding at the end the following:

17 “(11) YOUTH.—The term ‘youth’ means an in-
 18 dividual who has not attained 26 years of age.”.

19 (b) KINSHIP NAVIGATORS.—

20 (1) IN GENERAL.—Section 427 (42 U.S.C. 627)
 21 is amended—

22 (A) in the section heading, by striking
 23 “**FAMILY CONNECTION GRANTS**” and insert-
 24 ing “**KINSHIP NAVIGATORS**”;

25 (B) in subsection (a)—

1 (i) in the matter preceding paragraph
 2 (1), by striking “helping” and inserting
 3 “administering programs to help”;

4 (ii) by striking “of—” and all that
 5 follows through “a kinship” and inserting
 6 “of a kinship”;

7 (iii) in paragraph (1)(C)—

8 (I) by striking “and” at the end
 9 of clause (iii);

10 (II) by adding “and” at the end
 11 of clause (iv); and

12 (III) by adding at the end the
 13 following:

14 “(v) connections to individualized as-
 15 sistance, as needed;”;

16 (iv) by striking paragraphs (2)
 17 through (4);

18 (v) by redesignating subparagraphs
 19 (A) through (G) of paragraph (1) as para-
 20 graphs (1) through (7), respectively;

21 (vi) by redesignating clauses (i)
 22 through (iv) and clause (v) (as added by
 23 clause (iii)(III) of this subparagraph) as
 24 subparagraphs (A) through (E), respec-
 25 tively;

1 (vii) by moving each provision so re-
 2 designated 2 ems to the left; and

3 (viii) by striking “caregiving;” and in-
 4 serting “caregiving.”;

5 (C) in subsection (b)—

6 (i) in paragraph (1), by striking “1 or
 7 more of”;

8 (ii) by redesignating paragraphs (3)
 9 and (4) as paragraphs (4) and (5), respec-
 10 tively, and inserting after paragraph (2)
 11 the following:

12 “(3) a description of how the entity will directly
 13 fund, or provide data to the Secretary for, an eval-
 14 uation which will publish and submit information to
 15 the clearinghouse described in section 476(d)(2) and
 16 which is designed to meet the requirements of sec-
 17 tion 471(e)(4)(C), or a description of how the funds
 18 will be used to help the State transition to a pro-
 19 gram for which the State will seek reimbursement
 20 under section 474(a)(7);”;

21 (iii) in paragraph (4) (as so redesign-
 22 ated), by striking “and” at the end;

23 (iv) in paragraph (5) (as so redesign-
 24 ated), by striking the period and inserting
 25 “; and”; and

1 (v) by adding at the end the following:

2 “(6) if the entity is a State, local or tribal child
3 welfare agency—

4 “(A) documentation of support from a rel-
5 evant community-based organization with expe-
6 rience serving kinship families when applicable;
7 or

8 “(B) a description of how the organization
9 plans to coordinate its services and activities
10 with those offered by the relevant community-
11 based organizations.”;

12 (D) by striking subsection (d) and insert-
13 ing the following:

14 “(d) FEDERAL SHARE.—An entity to which a grant
15 is made under this section may use the grant to pay not
16 more than 75 percent of the cost of the activities to be
17 carried out by the entity pursuant to this section.”;

18 (E) in subsection (g)—

19 (i) by striking all that precedes “2
20 percent” and inserting the following:

21 “(g) RESERVATION OF FUNDS FOR TECHNICAL AS-
22 SISTANCE.—The Secretary may reserve”; and

23 (ii) by striking “subsection (h)” the
24 2nd place it appears and inserting “section
25 437(b)(6)”; and

1 (F) by striking subsection (h).

2 (2) RESERVATION OF DISCRETIONARY
3 FUNDS.—Section 437(b) (42 U.S.C. 629g(b)), as
4 amended by section 9(b) of this Act, is amended by
5 adding at the end the following:

6 “(6) KINSHIP NAVIGATORS.—The Secretary
7 shall reserve \$10,000,000 for grants under section
8 427 for each of fiscal years 2026 through 2029.”.

9 (3) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section
10 474(a)(7) (42 U.S.C. 674(a)(7)) is amended by
11 striking “427(a)(1)” and inserting “427(a)”.

12 **SEC. 12. AVOIDING NEGLECT BY ADDRESSING POVERTY.**

13 (a) FAMILY PRESERVATION SERVICES.—Section
14 431(a)(1) (42 U.S.C. 629a(a)(1)), as amended by section
15 11(a)(1) of this Act, is amended—

16 (1) in subparagraph (F), by striking “and”
17 after the semicolon;

18 (2) in subparagraph (G), by striking the period
19 and inserting “; and”; and

20 (3) by adding at the end the following:

21 “(H)(i) services providing nonrecurring
22 short term benefits (including supports related
23 to housing instability, utilities, transportation,
24 and food assistance, among other basic needs)
25 that address immediate needs related to a spe-

cific crisis, situation, or event affecting the ability of a child to remain in a home established for the child that is not intended to meet an ongoing need; and

“(ii) for purposes of this subpart, an expenditure for a service described in clause (i) may be treated as an expenditure for any 1 or more of family support services, family preservation services, family reunification services, or adoption promotion and support services as long as the expenditure is related to serving the children and families in the specified category and consistent with the overall purpose of the category.”.

(b) STATE PLAN REQUIREMENTS.—Section 432(a)

(42 U.S.C. 629b(a)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (9), by striking “and” after the semicolon;

(2) in paragraph (10), by striking the period and inserting “; and”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

“(11) provides a description of policies in place, including training for employees, to address child welfare reports and investigations of neglect concerning the living arrangements or subsistence needs

1 of a child with the goal to prevent the separation of
 2 a child from a parent of the child solely due to pov-
 3 erty, to ensure access to services described in section
 4 431(a)(1)(H).”.

5 **SEC. 13. STRENGTHENING SUPPORT FOR CASEWORKERS.**

6 (a) REAUTHORIZATION OF, AND INCREASE IN FUND-
 7 ING FOR, CASEWORKER VISITS.—Section 436(b)(4)(A)
 8 (42 U.S.C. 629f(b)(4)(A)) is amended by striking “each
 9 of fiscal years 2017 through 2023” and inserting “fiscal
 10 year 2025 and \$26,000,000 for fiscal year 2026 and each
 11 succeeding fiscal year”.

12 (b) MINIMUM GRANT AMOUNT.—Section 433(e) (42
 13 U.S.C. 629c(e)) is amended by striking paragraphs (1)
 14 and (2) and inserting the following:

15 “(1) BASE ALLOTMENT.—From the amount re-
 16 served pursuant to section 436(b)(4)(A) for any fis-
 17 cal year, the Secretary shall first allot to each State
 18 (other than an Indian tribe) that has provided to the
 19 Secretary such documentation as may be necessary
 20 to verify that the jurisdiction has complied with sec-
 21 tion 436(b)(4)(B)(ii) during the fiscal year, a base
 22 allotment of \$100,000, and shall then allot to each
 23 of those States an amount determined in paragraph
 24 (2) or (3) of this subsection, as applicable.

1 “(2) TERRITORIES.—From the amount reserved
2 pursuant to section 436(b)(4)(A) for any fiscal year
3 that remains after applying paragraph (1) of this
4 subsection for the fiscal year, the Secretary shall
5 allot to each jurisdiction specified in subsection (b)
6 of this section to which a base allotment is made
7 under such paragraph (1) an amount determined in
8 the same manner as the allotment to each of such
9 jurisdictions is determined under section 423 (with-
10 out regard to the initial allotment of \$70,000 to
11 each State).

12 “(3) OTHER STATES.—From the amount re-
13 served pursuant to section 436(b)(4)(A) for any fis-
14 cal year that remains after applying paragraphs (1)
15 and (2) of this subsection for the fiscal year, the
16 Secretary shall allot to each State (other than an In-
17 dian tribe) not specified in subsection (b) of this sec-
18 tion to which a base allotment was made under
19 paragraph (1) of this subsection an amount equal to
20 such remaining amount multiplied by the supple-
21 mental nutrition assistance program benefits per-
22 centage of the State (as defined in subsection (c)(2)
23 of this section) for the fiscal year, except that in ap-
24 plying subsection (c)(2)(A) of this section, ‘sub-

1 section (e)(3)’ shall be substituted for ‘such para-
2 graph (1)’.”.

3 (c) REQUIREMENT TO USE FUNDS TO IMPROVE
4 QUALITY OF CASEWORKER VISITS WITH FOSTER CHIL-
5 DREN.—Section 436(b)(4)(B)(i) (42 U.S.C.
6 629f(b)(4)(B)(i)) is amended to read as follows:

7 “(i) IN GENERAL.—A State to which
8 an amount is paid from amounts reserved
9 under subparagraph (A) shall use the
10 amount to improve the quality of monthly
11 caseworker visits with children who are in
12 foster care under the responsibility of the
13 State, with an emphasis on—

14 “(I) reducing caseload ratios and
15 the administrative burden on case-
16 workers, to improve caseworker deci-
17 sion making on the safety, perma-
18 nency, and well-being of foster chil-
19 dren and on activities designed to in-
20 crease retention, recruitment, and
21 training of caseworkers;

22 “(II) implementing technology
23 solutions to streamline caseworker du-
24 ties and modernize systems, ensuring

1 improved efficiency and effectiveness
 2 in child welfare services;

3 “(III) improving caseworker safe-
 4 ty;

5 “(IV) mental health resources to
 6 support caseworker well-being, includ-
 7 ing peer-to-peer support programs;
 8 and

9 “(V) recruitment campaigns
 10 aimed at attracting qualified case-
 11 worker candidates.”.

12 (d) ELIMINATION OF COST-SHARE PENALTY TIED
 13 TO MONTHLY CASEWORKER VISIT STANDARD.—Section
 14 424(f) (42 U.S.C. 624(f)) is amended—

15 (1) by striking “(1)(A)”; and

16 (2) by striking paragraphs (1)(B) and (2).

17 **SEC. 14. DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS FOR IMPROVING RE-**
 18 **LATIONSHIPS BETWEEN INCARCERATED**
 19 **PARENTS AND CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE.**

20 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 439 (42 U.S.C. 629i) is
 21 amended to read as follows:

1 **“SEC. 439. STATE PARTNERSHIP PLANNING AND DEM-**
2 **ONSTRATION GRANTS TO SUPPORT MEAN-**
3 **INGFUL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN FOSTER**
4 **CHILDREN AND THE INCARCERATED PAR-**
5 **ENTS OF THE CHILDREN.**

6 “(a) AUTHORITY.—

7 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may make
8 demonstration grants to eligible State partnerships
9 to develop, implement, and provide support for pro-
10 grams that enable and sustain meaningful relation-
11 ships between covered foster children and the incar-
12 cerated parents of the children.

13 “(2) PAYMENT OF ANNUAL INSTALLMENTS.—
14 The Secretary shall pay each demonstration grant in
15 5 annual installments.

16 “(3) 1-YEAR PLANNING GRANTS.—The Sec-
17 retary may make a planning grant to a recipient of
18 a demonstration grant, to be paid to the recipient 1
19 year before payment of the 1st annual installment of
20 the demonstration grant and in an amount not
21 greater than any installment of the demonstration
22 grant, if—

23 “(A) the recipient includes a request for a
24 planning grant in the application under sub-
25 section (c); and

1 “(B) the Secretary determines that a plan-
 2 ning grant would assist the recipient and im-
 3 prove the effectiveness of the demonstration
 4 grant.

5 “(b) ELIGIBLE STATE PARTNERSHIP DEFINED.—

6 “(1) IN GENERAL.—In this section, the term
 7 ‘eligible State partnership’ means an agreement en-
 8 tered into by, at a minimum, the following:

9 “(A) The State child welfare agency re-
 10 sponsible for the administration of the State
 11 plans under this part.

12 “(B) The State agency responsible for
 13 adult corrections.

14 “(2) ADDITIONAL PARTNERS.—For purposes of
 15 this section, an eligible State partnership may in-
 16 clude any entity with experience in serving incarcer-
 17 ated parents and their children.

18 “(3) PARTNERSHIPS ENTERED INTO BY INDIAN
 19 TRIBES OR TRIBAL CONSORTIA.—Notwithstanding
 20 paragraph (1), if an Indian tribe or tribal consor-
 21 tium enters into a partnership pursuant to this sec-
 22 tion that does not consist solely of tribal child wel-
 23 fare agencies (or a consortium of the agencies), the
 24 partnership shall be considered an eligible State
 25 partnership for purposes of this section.

1 “(c) APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS.—An eligible
2 State partnership seeking a demonstration grant under
3 this section to carry out a program described in subsection
4 (a)(1) shall submit an application to the Secretary at such
5 time, in such manner, and containing such information as
6 the Secretary may require. The application shall include
7 the following:

8 “(1) A summary of the program, including how
9 the program will support a meaningful relationship
10 between a covered foster child and an incarcerated
11 parent of the child.

12 “(2) A description of the activities to be carried
13 out by the program, which must include all of the
14 activities described in subsection (d) that are in the
15 best interest of the covered foster child.

16 “(3) A framework for identifying—

17 “(A) each covered foster child eligible for
18 services under the program, including, to the
19 extent practicable, coordination of data between
20 relevant State child welfare agencies and court
21 systems; and

22 “(B) the roles and responsibilities of the
23 entities in the partnership.

24 “(4) Documentation that the applicant is an eli-
25 gible State partnership.

1 “(5) Assurances that the applicant will partici-
 2 pate fully in the evaluation described in subsection
 3 (f)(2) and shall maintain records for the program,
 4 including demographic information disaggregated by
 5 relevant characteristics with respect to covered foster
 6 children and incarcerated parents who participate in
 7 the program.

8 “(d) PROGRAM ACTIVITIES.—To the extent that the
 9 activities are in the best interest of the covered foster
 10 child, the activities referred to in subsection (c)(2) shall
 11 include the following:

12 “(1) REVISION OF POLICIES.—Through con-
 13 sultation with incarcerated parents and their fami-
 14 lies, grantees shall promote organizational policies of
 15 participating child welfare entities and collaborating
 16 correctional facilities to promote meaningful rela-
 17 tionships through regular and developmentally ap-
 18 propriate communication and visitation between cov-
 19 ered foster children and the incarcerated parents, in-
 20 cluding, when appropriate, the following:

21 “(A) For child welfare entities—

22 “(i) inclusion of parents in case plan-
 23 ning and decision making for children;

24 “(ii) regular sharing of information
 25 and responses to requests for information

1 between caseworkers and incarcerated par-
 2 ents with respect to the case information
 3 of a child, any changes to a case, perma-
 4 nency plans, requirements to maintain pa-
 5 rental rights, and any efforts to terminate
 6 parental rights;

7 “(iii) appropriate opportunities for in-
 8 carcerated parents to demonstrate their re-
 9 lationship with a covered foster child given
 10 their incarceration, including training and
 11 courses required for a service plan; and

12 “(iv) the enhanced visitation described
 13 in paragraph (2).

14 “(B) For correctional facilities, fostering
 15 visitation and communication that is develop-
 16 mentally appropriate in terms of—

17 “(i) the nature of communication and
 18 visitation, including—

19 “(I) the ability to physically
 20 touch parents;

21 “(II) engaging with parents in lo-
 22 cations that are appropriate for the
 23 age and development of the child;

24 “(III) exchanging items that are
 25 appropriate to the age and develop-

1 ment of the child, include expectations
2 that are appropriate for the age and
3 development of the child related to be-
4 havior, attire, and wait times; and

5 “(IV) allowing appropriate adults
6 to bring children if legal guardians
7 are not available to promote regular
8 contact;

9 “(ii) reasonable inclusion of all chil-
10 dren of the parent;

11 “(iii) communication and visitation at
12 times when the children are available;

13 “(iv) security procedures to comfort
14 children and be minimally invasive; and

15 “(v) promoting parent-child relation-
16 ships regardless of the sentence imposed
17 on the parent.

18 “(2) ENHANCED VISITATION.—

19 “(A) Grantees shall facilitate weekly com-
20 munication and, for at least 9 days each year,
21 in-person visitation between a covered foster
22 child and any incarcerated parent of the child.

23 “(B) Electronic visitation (such as live
24 video visits, phone calls, and recorded books)
25 may be used but shall not be the sole method

1 to promote a meaningful relationship for pur-
2 poses of the grant.

3 “(C) Enhanced visitation programs shall—

4 “(i) integrate best practices for visita-
5 tion programs with incarcerated parents
6 and their children;

7 “(ii) adopt developmentally appro-
8 priate visitation policies and procedures
9 such as those described in paragraph
10 (1)(B);

11 “(iii) reduce or eliminate the cost of
12 developmentally appropriate communica-
13 tion and visitation for the covered foster
14 child, which may include the purchase of
15 communication technology, covering trans-
16 portation, insurance, and lodging costs,
17 costs related to providing appropriate visi-
18 tation spaces and activities, and other rel-
19 evant costs;

20 “(iv) to the extent practicable, inte-
21 grate appropriate parenting education to
22 help prepare and process visits; and

23 “(v) avoid restricting visitation and
24 communication as a punishment for the in-
25 carcerated parents.

1 “(3) TRAINING.—Grantees shall incorporate on-
2 going training for child welfare workers, correctional
3 facility staff, and other program providers to under-
4 stand the importance of promoting meaningful rela-
5 tionships between children and incarcerated parents.

6 “(4) CASE MANAGEMENT.—Grantees shall pro-
7 vide case management services for the incarcerated
8 parents of a covered foster child to promote the rela-
9 tionship, access to services, and coordination with
10 the caseworkers of the covered foster child to
11 strengthen the relationship.

12 “(5) LEGAL ASSISTANCE.—Grantees shall facili-
13 tate access to necessary legal services and may use
14 grant funds for services that are not reimbursable
15 under other Federal programs.

16 “(e) FEDERAL SHARE.—The Federal share of the
17 cost of any activity carried out using a grant made under
18 this section shall be not greater than 75 percent.

19 “(f) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, EVALUATIONS, AND
20 REPORTS.—

21 “(1) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary
22 shall provide technical assistance with respect to
23 grants under this section, including by—

24 “(A) assisting grantees in understanding
25 best practices in promoting meaningful relation-

1 ships between incarcerated parents and their
 2 children as well as consulting with appropriate
 3 stakeholders when developing their programs;

4 “(B) assisting grantees with establishing
 5 and analyzing implementation and performance
 6 indicators; and

7 “(C) conducting an annual technical assist-
 8 ance and training meeting and an annual grant-
 9 ee meeting so that grantees can learn from the
 10 experiences of other grantees.

11 “(2) EVALUATIONS.—The Secretary shall con-
 12 duct an evaluation of program outcomes, including
 13 with respect to parent and child well-being, parent-
 14 child interactions, parental involvement, awareness
 15 of child development and parenting practices, place-
 16 ment stability, and termination of parental rights
 17 with respect to covered foster children and incarcer-
 18 ated parents, to measure program effectiveness, as
 19 determined by the Secretary, and identify opportuni-
 20 ties for improved program practices and implemen-
 21 tation.

22 “(3) REPORTS TO THE CONGRESS.—

23 “(A) INITIAL REPORT.—Not later than 3
 24 years after the date of the enactment of this
 25 section, the Secretary shall submit to the Com-

mittee on Ways and Means of the House of
Representatives and the Committee on Finance
of the Senate a report that includes—

“(i) the number of applications for
grants under this section;

“(ii) the number of grants awarded,
and the amounts for each grant; and

“(iii) information on the grants, in-
cluding—

“(I) interim results of the evalua-
tion described in paragraph (2);

“(II) disaggregated data on cov-
ered foster children and incarcerated
parents;

“(III) information on the com-
position of eligible State partnerships;

“(IV) best practices for facili-
tating meaningful relationships be-
tween covered foster children and in-
carcerated parents; and

“(V) barriers to implementation
or expansion of programs funded
under this section.

“(B) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than 6
years after the date of the enactment of this

1 section, the Secretary shall submit to the Com-
 2 mittee on Ways and Means of the House of
 3 Representatives and the Committee on Finance
 4 of the Senate a report that includes—

5 “(i) the final results of the evaluation
 6 described in paragraph (2); and

7 “(ii) recommendations for refinements
 8 to grant requirements to improve program
 9 outcomes.

10 “(g) AUTHORITY OF SECRETARY WITH RESPECT TO
 11 INDIAN TRIBES AND TRIBAL ORGANIZATIONS.—

12 “(1) WAIVER OR MODIFICATION OF REQUIRE-
 13 MENTS.—In making a grant to an Indian tribe or
 14 tribal organization under this section, the Secretary
 15 may waive the matching requirement of subsection
 16 (e) or modify an application requirement imposed by
 17 or under subsection (c) if the Secretary determines
 18 that the waiver or modification is appropriate to the
 19 needs, culture, and circumstances of the Indian tribe
 20 or tribal organization.

21 “(2) EVALUATION.—The Secretary shall use
 22 tribally relevant data in carrying out the evaluation
 23 under subsection (f)(2) with respect to an Indian
 24 tribe or tribal organization.

1 “(h) LIMITATIONS ON AUTHORIZATION OF APPRO-
 2 PRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the
 3 Secretary not more than \$35,000,000 for each of fiscal
 4 years 2026 through 2029 to carry out this section.

5 “(i) DEFINITION OF COVERED FOSTER CHILD.—In
 6 this section, the term ‘covered foster child’ means a child
 7 that—

8 “(1) is in foster care; and

9 “(2) has at least 1 parent incarcerated in a
 10 Federal, State, or local correctional facility.”.

11 (b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

12 (1) Section 431(a)(2)(B)(vii) (42 U.S.C.
 13 629a(a)(2)(B)(vii)) is amended by striking “(as de-
 14 fined in section 439(b)(2))”.

15 (2) Section 431(a) (42 U.S.C. 629a(a)), as
 16 amended by sections 7(b)(2) and 11(a)(4) of this
 17 Act, is amended by adding at the end the following:

18 “(12) MENTORING.—The term ‘mentoring’
 19 means a structured, managed program in which chil-
 20 dren are appropriately matched with screened and
 21 trained adult volunteers for one on-one relationships,
 22 involving meetings and activities on a regular basis,
 23 intended to meet, in part, the child’s need for in-
 24 volvement with a caring and supportive adult who
 25 provides a positive role model.”.

1 **SEC. 15. GUIDANCE TO STATES ON IMPROVING DATA COL-**
2 **LECTION AND REPORTING FOR YOUTH IN**
3 **RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT PROGRAMS.**

4 Within 2 years after the date of the enactment of this
5 Act, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in con-
6 sultation with the Department of Education, the Adminis-
7 tration for Children and Families, the Centers for Medi-
8 care and Medicaid Services, the Administration for Com-
9 munity Living, the Department of Justice, and other rel-
10 evant policy experts, as determined by the Secretary, shall
11 issue and disseminate, or update and revise, as applicable,
12 guidance to State agencies in administering State plans
13 approved under parts B and E of title IV of the Social
14 Security Act on the following:

15 (1) Best practices for Federal and State agen-
16 cies to collect data and share information related to
17 the well-being of youth residing in residential treat-
18 ment facilities, including those facilities operating in
19 multiple States or serving out-of-state youth.

20 (2) Best practices on improving State collection
21 and sharing of data related to incidences of mal-
22 treatment of youth residing in residential treatment
23 facilities, including with respect to meeting the re-
24 quirement of section 471(a)(9)(A) of such Act for
25 such youth in foster care.

1 (3) Best practices on improving oversight of
 2 youth residential programs receiving Federal fund-
 3 ing, and research-based strategies for risk assess-
 4 ment related to the health, safety, and well-being of
 5 youth in the facilities.

6 **SEC. 16. STREAMLINING RESEARCH, TRAINING, AND TECH-**
 7 **NICAL ASSISTANCE FUNDING.**

8 (a) REPURPOSING DISCRETIONARY RESEARCH SET-
 9 ASIDE.—Section 435(c) (42 U.S.C. 629e(c)) is amended
 10 to read as follows:

11 “(c) EVALUATION, RESEARCH, AND TECHNICAL AS-
 12 SISTANCE WITH RESPECT TO TARGETED PROGRAM RE-
 13 SOURCES.—Of the amount reserved under section
 14 437(b)(1) for a fiscal year, the Secretary shall use not less
 15 than—

16 “(1) \$1,000,000 for technical assistance to
 17 grantees under section 437(f) and to support design
 18 of local site evaluations with the goal of publishing
 19 and submitting evaluation findings to the clearing-
 20 house established under section 476(d), or to award
 21 grants to allow current or former grantees under
 22 section 437(f) to analyze, publish, and submit to the
 23 clearinghouse data collected during past grants; and

24 “(2) \$1,000,000 for technical assistance re-
 25 quired under section 429B of this Act to support ef-

1 fective implementation of the Indian Child Welfare
 2 Act of 1978 and to support development of associ-
 3 ated State plan measures described pursuant to sec-
 4 tion 422(b)(9) of this Act.”.

5 (b) ELIMINATION OF RESEARCH SET-ASIDE FROM
 6 MANDATORY FUNDS.—

7 (1) IN GENERAL.—Section 436(b) (42 U.S.C.
 8 629f(b)), as amended by the preceding provisions of
 9 this Act, is amended by striking paragraph (1) and
 10 redesignating paragraphs (2) through (5) as para-
 11 graphs (1) through (4), respectively.

12 (2) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

13 (A) Section 433(a) (42 U.S.C. 629c(a)) is
 14 amended by striking “436(b)(3)” and inserting
 15 “436(b)(2)”.

16 (B) Section 433(e) (42 U.S.C. 629c(e)), as
 17 amended by section 13(b) of this Act, is amend-
 18 ed by striking “436(b)(4)(A)” and inserting
 19 “436(b)(3)(A)” each place it appears.

20 (C) Section 434(a)(2)(A) (42 U.S.C.
 21 629d(a)(2)(A)) is amended by striking
 22 “436(b)(4)(B)” and inserting “436(b)(3)(B)”.

23 (D) Section 437(b)(1) (42 U.S.C.
 24 629g(b)(1)) is amended by striking “436(b)(1)”
 25 and inserting “435”.

1 (E) Section 437(f)(3) (42 U.S.C.
2 629g(f)(3)) is amended by striking “436(b)(5)”
3 and inserting “436(b)(4)”.

4 (F) Section 438(c) (42 U.S.C. 629g(c)) is
5 amended in each of paragraphs (1) through (3)
6 is amended by striking “436(b)(2)” and insert-
7 ing “436(b)(1)”.

8 **SEC. 17. REPORT ON POST ADOPTION AND SUBSIDIZED**
9 **GUARDIANSHIP SERVICES.**

10 (a) IN GENERAL.—Within 2 years after the date of
11 the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Health and
12 Human Services shall prepare and submit to the Com-
13 mittee on Ways and Means of the House of Representa-
14 tives and the Committee on Finance of the Senate a report
15 on children who enter into foster care under the super-
16 vision of a State administering a plan approved under part
17 B or E of title IV of the Social Security Act after finaliza-
18 tion of an adoption or legal guardianship.

19 (b) INFORMATION.—The Secretary shall include in
20 the report information, to the extent available through the
21 Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System
22 and other data sources, regarding the incidence of adop-
23 tion disruption and dissolution affecting children described
24 in subsection (a) and factors associated with such cir-
25 cumstances, including—

1 (1) whether affected individuals received pre- or
2 post-legal adoption services; and

3 (2) other relevant information, such as the age
4 of the child involved.

5 (c) POST-ADOPTION SERVICES AND GUARDIAN-
6 SHIP.—The Secretary shall include in the report—

7 (1) a summary of post-adoption services and
8 guardianship in each State that are available to fam-
9 ilies that adopted children from foster care and the
10 extent to which the services are evidence-based or
11 evidence-informed; and

12 (2) a summary of funding and funding sources
13 for the services in each State, including set-asides
14 under the Promoting Safe and Stable Families pro-
15 gram.

16 **SEC. 18. EFFECTIVE DATE.**

17 (a) IN GENERAL.—The amendments made by this
18 Act shall take effect on October 1, 2025, and shall apply
19 to payments under part B of title IV of the Social Security
20 Act for calendar quarters beginning on or after such date.

21 (b) DELAY PERMITTED IF STATE LEGISLATION RE-
22 QUIRED.—If the Secretary of Health and Human Services
23 determines that State legislation (other than legislation
24 appropriating funds) is required in order for a State plan
25 developed pursuant to part B of title IV of the Social Se-

1 curity Act to meet the additional requirements imposed
2 by the amendments made by this Act, the plan shall not
3 be regarded as failing to meet any of the additional re-
4 quirements before the 1st day of the 1st calendar quarter
5 beginning after the first regular session of the State legis-
6 lature that begins after the date of the enactment of this
7 Act. For purposes of the preceding sentence, if the State
8 has a 2-year legislative session, each year of the session
9 is deemed to be a separate regular session of the State
10 legislature.

11 (c) APPLICATION TO PROGRAMS OPERATED BY IN-
12 DIAN TRIBAL ORGANIZATIONS.—In the case of an Indian
13 tribe, tribal organization, or tribal consortium that the
14 Secretary of Health and Human Services determines re-
15 quires time to take action necessary to comply with the
16 additional requirements imposed by the amendments made
17 by this Act (whether the tribe, organization, or tribal con-
18 sortium has a plan under section 479B of the Social Secu-
19 rity Act or a cooperative agreement or contract entered
20 into with a State), the Secretary shall provide the tribe,
21 organization, or tribal consortium with such additional
22 time as the Secretary determines is necessary for the tribe,
23 organization, or tribal consortium to take the action to

- 1 comply with the additional requirements before being re-
- 2 garded as failing to comply with the requirements.

